

LIVING WITH THE CHURCH

A Handbook of Instruction in the Liturgy of the Church Year

By DOM OTTO HAERING, O.S.B.

Translated by

DOM REMBERT BULARZIK, O.S.B.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

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✠PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES
Archbishop of New York

New York, January 7, 1930

FROM THE AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

This handbook is the result of many years of instruction in the classroom. As such, its general trend is practical rather than theoretical. Although it gives no hint of any special teaching method, the capable instructor will soon discover the author's purpose.

Especial attention is given to the historical aspect of the liturgy. As a result the explanatory matter for some of the feasts has become somewhat extensive; but the general unity of the treatment has not suffered thereby. Besides, many of these historical references will no doubt be welcomed, since pupils of the higher classes, as experience has amply shown, take an active interest in the history of the various feasts. The author suggests that special stress be put on the "Admonition" at the end of the various explanations, and that it be omitted neither in the religious instruction nor in the liturgical sermon. Hence the admonitions are developed with greater abundance of idea. There may be a difference of opinion regarding the many hymns that have been included. Some teachers may prefer the hymns of their diocesan hymn-book. But "variety is the spice of life!"

When the author commenced his career as a catechist, at the turn of the century, liturgical instruction was still in some places much underrated. Thanks to the growing liturgical apostolate, this situation has greatly improved. With the former exclusive stress on doctrinal formularies, many a catechist never found an opportunity to discuss with his pupils, say, one or the other of the beautiful Sequences of the Missal, or to explain one of the Lamentations of Holy Week, or to take them through the magnificent burial rite of the Church. We expect too much

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

from mere doctrinal instruction—practice and habit are most important in religious education. He who culpably avoids leading young people to an understanding of the liturgy is called, by the Council of Trent, a hard-hearted provider, who denies children the necessary food for which they are crying out (*Trid. Session 22, c. VIII*).

The author considers it one of the chief tasks of the religious instructor to bring the young to a deeper understanding of the church year, and thus to lead them on to a life that is in close contact with Mother Church. "The church year, in its wonderful structure, its magnificent feasts, its colorful liturgy, is like a treasure-house. But this treasury must be unlocked for our young people, and all its contents must be explained and evaluated. Thus, in the course of years, children will learn to love their Church and all that belongs to her life; and in later years they will not stand in crowds apart, thinking that all such things are only for select pious souls and have nothing to offer particularly to men-folk."¹

May the divine Teacher bless the manual for the salvation of our growing youth!

¹ As these quotations are from German sources which are little known and unavailable in this country, the names of the books and authors are contained in a list at the end of this book and correspond to these superior figures.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation reproduces the German work of Dom Otto Haering almost entirely. Several local references of a minor nature were omitted because they are of no interest to American readers. The hymns of Dreves that are included in the original have been omitted, being replaced in a number of instances by translations of Breviary hymns of the Reverend John M. Neale or of the Reverend Edward Caswall or of others or else by new translations directly from the Breviary. In some instances translations of the original Latin were substituted for responses in verse.

The translator considers it a great privilege to have been permitted to reproduce this work for our young Catholic Americans. Thanks are due to the author for his ready and hearty consent to have his work made accessible to English-speaking catechists and their students. And, finally, thanks are due to my confrères of the Liturgical Press for the incentive and encouragement they have given me.

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Feast of St. John the Baptist, 1929

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER: THE CHURCH YEAR

Like a true friend, the church year accompanies us throughout our life, teaching and admonishing us, consoling and delighting us. At Christmas time in our childhood we felt vividly what the divine Child in the manger means. On Good Friday we were affected by the Church's deep mourning. And how glad we felt on Easter Sunday on hearing the joyous peal of the bells! Now that we are older, we learn much more of the value of the church year and of the moral power of its mysteries. At times life's storms assail us—we are weighed down with cares and sorrows. But whether it be life's pains or its joys we are experiencing, we realize that our strongest support and our highest consolation is to be found in the teachings and mysteries which the Church brings before our minds year for year, season for season.

All of us, therefore, should know the meaning of the church year, and how necessary it is for us to enter into its spirit. "He who has merely learnt that he is obliged to assist at Mass on the many Sundays and holydays, to deny himself food on the many days of fast, to keep away from certain pleasures during the forbidden time, and to go to Confession and Communion at Easter time—such a one readily imagines that he is being chained to a cold and formal ritualism whenever he hears 'church year' mentioned; and he envies those who know nothing of the Church or of its liturgical year and live in golden freedom."² One who merely drifts along out of mere habit, and without thinking, will gain but little spiritual profit from the church year.

On February 9, 1824, the saintly Anne Catherine Emmerich died. She became known through certain apparitions in which

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she saw the life of Jesus and of the apostles passing before her eyes. Of these she gave astonishing interpretations, although she had pursued no studies whatsoever. All she had learnt at school, according to her biography, was the catechism, the ordinary Bible history, and the almanac. People knew this almanac much better formerly than now; and they knew not merely the various market days and weather rules, but also the feasts of our Lord and of the saints, such feasts being printed in heavier type or in red.

“Too many feast days!” we say in surprise on thinking of days gone by. Indeed, there were many; but people did not tire of celebrating them. In those days innocent worldly customs were combined with the celebration of the mysteries of the Church and people eagerly welcomed them. During Advent the faithful attended the early morning Masses and sang the hymns so full of longing for the coming Savior. With Christmas came the distribution of candy and nuts, the songs at the manger, and the midnight Mass. After twelve wintry days came the “Three Kings” with their star. Then came Candlemas, Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter with its resurrection service and its colored eggs. And later Ascension Day, Pentecost and Corpus Christi with its solemn procession. On the feast of St. John special cakes were served. Herbs were blessed on the feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady. Then came the anniversary of the dedication of the church, and All Souls’ Day, on which the graves were decorated, and so on.

Surely the church year must have something to say to us if it is to have a lasting influence on our Christian life. The festal times which make up the church year must have more than a mere calendar meaning for us. At such times of special feasts and church celebrations, certain definite ideas or impressions must be given us to remind us of Christian truths and duties, and to make us realize the true solemnity and special mood peculiar to each feast. At no time do we hear more profound truths and more effective admonitions than on feast days and during the harmoniously recurrent seasons of the church year.

1. Origin of the Church Year. A public and common worship of God must needs have definitely fixed days and hours in which it is to take place. The succession of day and night, and of the seasons and years, is in itself a call to man to think of God and to enter into communion with Him at stated times. The light of day is made for work. The darkness of night invites to retirement and earnest thinking. The change from day to night reminds us that we should begin our day's work with God, and at night commend ourselves to His protection. In the successive seasons of the year the fruits of the earth spring up and ripen, and thus give us the means of sustaining life; while the procession of the years reminds us of the fleeting character of all earthly things. For out of the single years our life is made up. Civilized peoples in ages past recognized in these various changes a call to worship God and instituted sacred feasts to that end. Such an arrangement of feasts is common to all religions.

Christ Himself did not appoint holy seasons and feast days. But He gave to the Church the full power to do this; He planted the seed out of which grew the richness of life in the Church.

The general ground-plan of the Christian church year was already laid down in the Old Testament law pertaining to feast days, sabbaths, and the division of weeks. The celebration of the highest Jewish feasts, Easter and Pentecost, was carried over from the Old Testament.

But the idea of a church year was not clearly grasped until towards the end of the sixteenth century. And only after the civil year was made to begin with the first of January, in accordance with the Gregorian calendar, was the idea of a church year more clearly understood and adapted to pastoral needs.

During the Middle Ages no distinction was made between the church year and the civil year. Nor was the division of the church year into Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost seasons known at that time.

In more recent times efforts were occasionally made to trace

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the origin of Christian feasts to heathenism, or to give them a natural seasonal explanation. But that is altogether wrong. From the very beginning even to this day, Christian feasts were instituted to celebrate the great mysteries and truths of faith and of the Redemption. If one or the other such feast happened to coincide more or less with those of heathendom, which they gradually supplanted, it does not by any means follow that they had a heathen origin. What is true is that the Church now and then sought to do away with heathen festivals by instituting Christian feasts in their place, and thus tried to counteract heathen customs.

At bottom the church year with its holy seasons and feast days goes back to God Himself. It was He who gave it to us through His Church. We may well apply here the words of the wise son of Sirach, who asks: "Why doth one day excel another, and one light another, and one year another year, when all come of the sun?" The answer is: "By the knowledge of the Lord they were distinguished. . . . And he ordered the seasons, and holidays of them. . . . Some of them God made high and great days, and some of them he put in the number of ordinary days" (Ecclesiasticus 33, 7ff.).

2. Division of the Church Year. Just as our Lord's death upon the cross is the center of the whole work of the Redemption, so the center and the principal feast of the entire church year is the feast of Easter. Beginning with its preparatory season and closing with its subsequent observances, it extends from Septuagesima Sunday to the Saturday after the feast of Pentecost.

The feast of Christmas is second in rank. Its preparatory season begins with the first Sunday of Advent, and it closes with the octave of Epiphany, commonly called the feast of the Three Kings.

The church year thus consists of two great festal cycles which conform to the two principal divisions of the year.

In winter we have the Christmas cycle; and in summer, together with the transitions of spring and autumn, the Easter cycle. These two cycles are alike in general structure. Both begin with a time of preparation—Advent in the one instance, Lent in the other. Both proceed by gradual development to their principal feasts—Christmas in the first instance, Easter in the second. Both, again, are carried over, in their culminating height as it were, to other great feasts which bring them to completion—Epiphany and Pentecost. Finally the two enter upon a series of ordinary Sundays—the Sundays after Epiphany and after Pentecost. In this division of the church year into two great festal cycles, the Easter cycle is evidently wider in extent and is the more important.

A threefold division of the church year into the Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost cycles, has something in its favor. It is untenable, however, since the Church recognizes but two such cycles, taking Pentecost as belonging to the Easter cycle. Pentecost week, according to the prayer of the Church, concludes the time of Easter. The Roman Missal states expressly on the Saturday after Pentecost: "*Post missam expirat tempus paschale*—after the Mass the time of Easter ends." The statement is authoritative. The period following, till Advent, does not stand in any special relation to the feast of Pentecost as such. It cannot be said, however, that the liturgy of the remaining time has no order or connection. It rather presents a series of groupings, which is determined as much by the liturgical character of the ordinary Sundays of the year as by the many individual feasts of our Lord and of the saints distributed throughout the church year.

3. Meaning of the Church Year. During the course of the year the Church acquaints us with the facts of the Redemption. The great work of the Redemption, in its historical progress and in its effects in the order of grace, is made present to us year after year. The church year, then, is not a mere commemoration of events long past, nor a mere mental recalling of the facts of salvation; it carries with it a call *to live the various aspects of the life of Jesus and to imitate the virtues of the saints.* "Just as it accompanies the Savior, from the time of His coming

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according to the Promise unto the time of His second coming on the day of judgment, so is it also intended to be our guide—that we may be imbued with a longing for Christ, with a desire for heaven through Him, and may continue to advance through the Holy Ghost.”³ Thus, the church year should be for each one of us a true spiritual renewal in Christ.

Christianity is not mere teaching or doctrine. It is, above all, *living and doing*. For this reason the Church, while keeping close to the historical course of the work of our redemption, places before us separately each of the great events of our divine Savior’s life.

The Church thereby gives us an opportunity to enter into the work of our redemption, to glorify God out of gratitude for what His only-begotten Son did for our salvation, and thus to make our innermost being and our whole life conform more and more to Christ as our pattern. For, as the Apostle of the Gentiles tells us, “be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth” (Ephesians 4, 23-24).

The church year is properly called the *year of grace* because the source of all grace, Christ Himself, is mystically present at each feast during that year. In fact, Christ is the very nucleus, the resplendent light and life-giving center of every celebration of the Church.

The church year is, moreover, a year *filled with divine truth*, because in every feast some truth or other is presented to the faithful for their deeper and better understanding of it. Both the words used and the ceremonies prescribed assist in their religious education.

As the sun proceeds on its course throughout the civil year, so Christ, the “Sun of Justice,” is brought before us throughout the church year in the principal mysteries of His life and work as God-Man. He is expected during Advent and is born at Christmas. He reveals Himself in the feast of the Epiphany; He is presented in the temple on Candlemas day. On Good Friday He is crucified. He rises from the grave in glory at Easter, ascends into heaven, sends the Holy Ghost, and rules gloriously in heaven while on earth His Church continues His

work. At all times Christ Himself is present during the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

ADMONITION

St. Peter, who saw and accompanied our Lord in the Holy Land, says: "He went about doing good" (Acts 10, 38). In the same way He continues to go on throughout the holy year of the Church. Truly it is ever *a year of salvation and of grace*.

The Catholic Christian cannot afford to let the many great graces of the church year slip by unused. He should try to understand the spirit and the purpose of each one of the feast days, recall the special mystery commemorated, then ponder it carefully and take it to heart. He should, moreover, try to carry out in daily life the various admonitions which the Church points out in her divine service, in the readings from Holy Scripture, and in her ceremonies. In short, he owes it to himself to acquire the graces and fruits of the work of the Redemption and thus to be made more and more holy.

Just as there are plants that grow for one season only, then decay and die, so there are people who die soon after Baptism. For such as these there is no church year. But there are other plants—the trees that grow higher with every year, until felled by man, by a storm, or by a lightning bolt. We should be like these trees. With every year our soul-life ought to grow more and bring forth more and more fruit, "until we meet," as St. Paul says, "into the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4, 13). What we have omitted in one church year we should make up in the one following; for God is long-suffering and waits with much patience until His seedlings bear fruit. We are to act as did our Savior, who said: "I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9, 4).

THE CHURCH YEAR

THE WORDS OF A POPE

“The feasts of the church year are more suitable for instructing people in the faith and for bringing the fullness of interior joy to their souls than the solemn expositions of the Church’s teaching office. For these expositions are generally appreciated by but a few of the learned; the feasts, however, teach and quicken all the people. The spoken word sounds but once; the feasts speak to us every year and at all times. Dissertations have a salutary influence upon the mind; but the feast days influence the heart as well as the mind and thus grip the whole man.

“Since man is made up of body and soul, he needs the stimulating force conveyed by the feasts, so that his spirit may receive instruction from the manifold beauty of the holy rites, and so that these go over into flesh and blood and thus advance his spiritual life” (Pope Pius XI in the *Encyclical Letter on the Feast of the Kingship of Christ*).

PART ONE

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

With the coming of winter, darkness predominates, and nature is benumbed with the rigors of cold. We then like to withdraw to the quiet and warmth of our homes. In similar spirit the cycle of winter feasts is mainly of a meditative character. In the midst of the spiritual darkness of a sin-benumbed world the Church sees arising within herself the light and the heavenly glory of Christ. This coming of the divine Light in the wintry night of earthly life is—Christmas!

I. ADVENT

Thy Savior cometh, Emmanuel,
Rejoice, be glad, O Israel!
(*Hymn*)

“Advent bells are ringing in the wintry morning, and from within the sunlit portals and windows of our churches the old Advent hymns, so expressive of longing, come floating towards us. At such a time our heart is lifted with heavenly desire above this earth towards the Savior. Children are glad at the thought that the Christchild will soon be with us, and their joy is shared also by their elders. Even in the miserable mess of sin there is a gentle stirring of new hope and confidence—it is Advent.”⁴

1. History of Advent. The observance of the Advent season began with an Advent fast. The fast is older than the liturgical observance of Advent as such. It seems that the custom of fasting in preparation for the birthday of our Lord originated in the bishopric of Tours. Evidence for this we have from the synod of

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Mâcon held in 581. From Tours the Advent fast spread to the rest of France. According to the writings of Pope Gregory the Great, it was also introduced in Rome in the sixth century. It was in Rome that Advent developed into a liturgical part of the church year, and from Rome the observance spread to the whole of the Western world. The Greeks do not observe Advent; instead, since the eighth century, they keep a six weeks' fast before Christmas.

The number of Advent Sundays was not everywhere the same. It fluctuated between three and six. To this day, the Ambrosian liturgy has six Sundays of Advent. Formerly the Sundays were counted backwards—what we now call the first Sunday, was then called the fourth. The last Sunday was called *Hebdomada* or *Dominica ante Natale Domini*—the week or the Sunday before the birth of our Lord.

According to some writers the four weeks, or rather the four Sundays of Advent, refer to the 4000 years during which mankind had to wait for the coming of the Savior. But neither in the Scriptures nor in the other sources of revelation, and neither in the divine service nor in the official teaching of the Church, is it put down for certain that precisely 4000 years elapsed from the time of Adam to that of Christ.

2. Meaning and Spirit of Advent. Advent means arrival. The purpose of Advent is to prepare us for the arrival of our Lord. It should also remind us of the long waiting of the world before the time of Christ, and of our waiting for another coming, so that we may not be found unprepared. We distinguish a three-fold Advent:

- (1) The arrival of Jesus upon earth at His birth.
- (2) The arrival of Jesus in the hearts of Christians.
- (3) The arrival of Jesus at the Last Judgment.

A. Advent insistently reminds us of the time before Christ and of its spiritual void and darkness. Mankind sat "in darkness and in the shadow of death." Even today we are touched by the cries of suffering and the outbursts of woe, through which the

people of old gave vent to their misery. How painful and depressed were the old melodies of Sion, until the time came in which all was fulfilled, until the heavens opened and the clouds did "rain the just," and the earth did "open and bud forth a Savior" upon this stricken earth!

With this mood of Advent the season is in full agreement. Nature, with her steadily shortening days and lengthening nights, her rich coloring gone and her cold wintry days coming on, quietly and persistently recalls those dreary times before the Savior's coming.

B. Advent is a time of preparation for our Lord's coming into our hearts. A blind man is still in the darkness of night even after the sun has risen. The Sun of Salvation, Christ, has risen long ago upon mankind. Yet it depends upon the worthiness of each one of us whether this Sun will light up his soul with truth and grace. The Church celebrates the four weeks of preparation so that we may become worthy of Christ's coming into our hearts.

The meaning of Advent is beautifully pointed out in the Collect of the second Sunday of Advent: "Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the ways of thine only-begotten Son: that through His coming we may be worthy to serve Thee with purified minds."

Do not say: "Why wait till Christmas when Christ comes every day?" He does, indeed, come daily. But at Christmas there is a distinct difference: on the part of God, because God attaches His graces to the great mysteries of the church year; and on our part, because we are made more susceptible to their efficacy through our preparation.

Advent makes us think also of those countries and nations, as well as of those souls, in whom Christ, the Sun of Justice, is not yet risen, and who today still dwell in the shadow of death, as did all men in the time before Christ. During Advent holy Church, like a loving mother, implores the Savior to come also to these souls and bestow upon them His heavenly gifts.

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“Even today the world is sighing sorrowfully, and ardently longing for help. Heathenism is not yet overcome. Extensive portions of the earth are still in the power of utter darkness. Thousands still pass their days without God and without Christ. Despite their need of salvation they do not draw nigh to the Savior, because they are not aware of their blindness and do not know how miserable they really are. Even today poor human beings, bowed down with a tremendous weight of sin and suffering, are sighing and seeking for paradise. They are longing for help, but it does not come. They seek but do not find. They do not approach their Savior and He does not come to them.

“*‘If you seek me with all your heart you will surely find me.’* Therein lies the secret. ‘As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God.’ He is the Savior of mankind. He alone—Christ, our God—will save them even today. . . . He draws the human heart out of every distress, and into His kingdom. He gives back lost peace; He heals the wounded, consoles the oppressed, lifts up the fallen—on condition that they sincerely look up to Him in faith and love.

“Then comes Christmas: A light is risen in the darkness, and His salvation shines upon the peoples anew.”⁴

C. *Advent also reminds us of that third coming of our Lord* which all of us are awaiting—His coming on the last day, in great power and majesty, to judge the whole world. Read the Gospel of the first Sunday of Advent. In like manner the first responsory of the Matins of that Sunday gives forceful expression to this idea:

1. I look from afar, and behold!
I see the power of God coming,
And a cloud covering all the land.
2. Go ye out to meet Him and say:
“Tell us if Thou art He
That shall reign over the people Israel.”
3. All ye earthborn and children of men
Both low and high, rich and poor together,
Go ye out to Him and say:

4. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
Tell us if Thou art He."
5. Lift up your gates, O ye princes;
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of Glory shall come in
That shall reign over God's people Israel.
(Translation of the Marquess of Bute)

To this idea is joined the *coming of our Lord at our death*. Suppose you knew that at Christmas, about midnight, our Lord would come to you—on your deathbed. How would you prepare yourself for such an event? Thomas à Kempis expresses this idea as follows: "From festival to festival we should make our resolution, as if we were then to depart from this world and to come to the eternal festival. And so we ought carefully to prepare ourselves in seasons of devotion, and walk the more devoutly, and keep every observance the more strictly, as if we were in a little while to receive from God the reward of our labor. And if it be put off, let us believe that we were not well enough prepared, and as yet unworthy of that so great glory which shall be revealed to us in the time appointed; and let us study to prepare ourselves the better for our departure" (*Imitation of Christ*, Book I, ch. 19, §§6 and 7).

This idea of dying at Christmas is also well expressed in the Mass of the feast of St. Stephen. There we see how a martyr by his death celebrates Christmas and sees "the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of the power of God."

D. *Although Advent is a penitential season*, it never approaches the strictness of Lent; on the contrary, *there is always something joyful about it*.

The Church reminds us in various ways of the *serious aspect* of the penitential season:

(a) By having the Gospel of the last judgment read and explained to us on the first Sunday, and the penitential sermons of St. John the Baptist on the succeeding Sundays.

(b) By forbidding the solemnizing of marriage and all the accompanying noisy merrymaking.

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(c) By prescribing the use of violet vestments and the omission of the *Gloria* at Mass.

(d) By obliging us to keep special fast days (Ember days and the Vigil of Christmas).

The joyful aspect of Advent is noted especially in the *Alleluia*, which is not dead and buried as during Lent. We become aware of a certain ring of joyfulness in church services, which re-echoes within our hearts. The Antiphons, the Lessons from the prophet Isaias, and the *Rorate* Masses give voice to a happy expectancy. The third Sunday of Advent (*Gaudete*) especially is expressive of joy. It is close to our Lord's birthday; the organ is again played; the altars are decorated; the use of rose-colored vestments is permitted; dalmatics are used instead of the folded chasuble.

ADMONITION

The holy season of Advent should remind us of the wretchedness of sin and of the yearning and need of mankind for the Savior. In the long night of waiting for the Redeemer, the world cried out: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Savior" (Isaias 45, 8).

During Advent we should prepare ourselves for Christ's more intimate coming into our hearts. Interior recollection should make us realize how great a misery sin really is, and help us cut ourselves off from all that is sin and leads to sin. We must avoid the world's allurements, center our desires in the coming Savior and open our hearts to Him, so that He will come, with His peace and grace, to be born anew at Christmas also in our hearts.

The quiet season of Advent suggests that we withdraw from distracting worldly pleasures; it encourages us to do penance and to purify ourselves. As St. John was a forerunner of Christ, so should our purification precede the celebration of Christmas. Therefore,

(1) *Pray diligently*: assist at the liturgical services during Advent; pray well in the morning and in the evening; often

repeat the "good intention" during the day. A fitting ejaculatory prayer for Advent is, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above. . . ."

(2) *Overcome yourself*—in speaking, in eating, in early rising; wage war against your chief failing.

(3) *Perform acts of mercy*: Pray for unbelievers, for the erring, and for the conversion of sinners. Give Advent alms for the poor and for the heathen. Pray especially for the heathen, so that they also may soon be able to celebrate Christmas.

II. CHRISTMAS

We rejoice in thee,
Blest festivity,
Grace-bestowing Christmastide.
In a world forlorn,
Christ our Lord is born;
Happy be, rejoice with glee,
O Christendom!

It is almost Christmas. The eager longing of the Church for the Savior becomes more and more insistent. "*Veni, veni—Come, come,*" she asks again and again in many different ways.

1. The proximate preparation for the feast of Christmas begins on December 17 with the so-called *Great* or *O Antiphons*. These are sung at the Magnificat of Vespers, sometimes with great solemnity, and in some places amid the ringing of bells. The seven antiphons are called the Great Antiphons because of their profound content; and O Antiphons, since each one begins with O. They are, in a way, a preparatory octave preceding the feast of Christmas.

THE O ANTIPHONS

December 17: O Wisdom, who camest out of the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, and mightily and

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sweetly ordering all things: come to teach us the way of prudence.

December 18: O Adonai, and Leader of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, and didst give him the law upon Sinai: come to redeem us by Thy outstretched arm.

December 19: O Root of Jesse, who standest for a sign unto all people, before whom the kings shall keep silence, whom the gentiles shall beseech: come to deliver us, do no longer delay.

December 20: O Key of David, and Scepter of the house of Israel, who openest and no man cloeth, and closest and no man openeth: come, and lead out from prison the captive that sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 21: O Day-star, Brightness of the eternal Light and Sun of Justice: come and give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22: O King of the nations and the Desired of them, Cornerstone that of the two makest one: come and save man whom thou hast fashioned from the dust of the earth.

December 23: O Emmanuel, our King and our Lawgiver, Expected of nations and their Savior: come to save us, O Lord our God.

2. The Vigil of Christmas, December 24, commemorates our first parents, Adam and Eve. The first Adam, who brought us sin, and the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who takes it away, have drawn nigh to each other. It seems as if we heard St. Paul saying to us: "For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one [Jesus Christ], many shall be made just" (Romans 5, 19).

A hallowed eve and a holy night are celebrated in resemblance of that holy night in which Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, was born.

CHRISTMAS EVE CUSTOMS

A. *The Christmas Tree.* Meaning of the Christmas tree:

(1) This tree represents the tree of life in paradise, or

the tree of the cross on which Christ regained for us the supernatural life of grace.

- (2) The fruits upon the tree and the many gifts are to remind us of the fullness of the graces that Christ merited for us upon the cross.
- (3) The lights on the tree represent Christ, the Light of the World.

B. *The Christmas Crib.* The setting up of a crib in church dates from the time of St. Francis of Assisi, who at Christmas, about the year 1223, set up the first one in a grotto at Greccio in the vale of Rieti. Here the Saint held devotions with the country folk of the vicinity. From this place the custom spread throughout the whole Catholic world.

“The crib is more in harmony with the Catholic idea than the less symbolic Christmas tree with its presumably heathen origin and Germanic character. We do not wish to do away with the Christmas tree. We should know, however, that the crib with the Christchild is surely the more Catholic of the two. Hence both had best go together.”⁶

C. *The distribution of gifts* to children and to the poor is to remind us of the poverty of the Christchild. Christmas presents are expressive of joy and gratitude for the great Gift God gave us in the new-born Savior. The presents are signs of Christian love, and symbols of the supernatural graces which the Christchild brought down to us. We may rightly say, therefore, that “the Christchild brings us the presents”; for without the Christchild there would be no Christmas, no Christmas joys, and no Christmas presents.

3. **The Holy Feast of Christmas.** Christmas is the feast of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Church, in order to express her joy in the birth of the Savior more fully, permits priests to celebrate three holy Masses on this day.

A. *The Three Masses.* As early as the time of Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), three Masses were celebrated on Christmas day—the first at midnight, called Mass of the Angels (because of its Gospel); the second at daybreak, called the Mass of the

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Shepherds (for the same reason); and the third, the later High Mass, the solemn Mass of the feast.

“Just as the two other great feasts, Easter and Pentecost, had two Masses each—the first as a conclusion to the Vigil, the second during the day as the Mass of the feast—so at the introduction of the Christmas feast a Mass was celebrated at midnight in commemoration of Christ’s birth and another during the day. On this same day the Roman Church also celebrates the anniversary of the holy martyr, the virgin Anastasia. But this feast was soon so dominated by the liturgy of Christmas that only a commemoration of the Saint remains on this her day of death.”⁶

According to medieval liturgists the three Masses should recall to us our Lord’s human birth, His birth in the hearts of Christians, and His eternal birth in the bosom of the Father.

The three Masses gradually bring out the full idea of the feast. “The Advent mood still seems to linger about the first Mass. The brightness of God’s majesty is there revealed; a multitude of angels hover over the earth; and the Mother, the purest of maidens, is the only human being close to the divine Child; waiting mankind is still enveloped in the darkness of night. The idea of Christmas rises with the second Mass, *in aurora*, which is celebrated at daybreak. The divine Light, which mysteriously appeared on earth under the veil of darkness, rises as a sun for us; and, mighty in its creative power, it enters into active relation to ourselves as ‘our Savior.’ In the third Mass the Christmas idea is fully unfolded and reveals itself in its effects to all men.”⁷

B. *History of the Feast.* We do not know on what day Christ was born. Neither Sacred Scripture nor the tradition of the Church is certain on this point. No celebration of our Lord’s birth took place in apostolic and in early Christian times. It was only in the third century that the feast was celebrated in some places on January 6, and not by itself, but together with

other mysteries of the life of Jesus. In Eastern countries this custom thus continued for a long time. In Rome, however, soon after peace came to the Church (313) under Constantine the Great, it became customary to celebrate the birth of our Lord on December 25. From Rome the custom spread to the churches of the West; but in the Orient it did not gain a foothold until towards the end of the fourth century.

Just why Christmas was celebrated on December 25 we can only conjecture. It is certain, however, that the time of the winter equinox was celebrated by the pagans. Among the Romans, December 25, on which a change in the length of the day became noticeable, was called *Natalis solis invicti*—the birthday of the unconquerable sun-god. This may have been the occasion for the Christians of Rome to celebrate this feast with their fellow citizens and to refer it to Christ; for in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, Christ is very often compared with the light of the world—the sun.

Christmas is a Feast of Light. Christ is the “true Sun,” the Light of the world that is come into the darkness of sinful earth. This beautiful Christmas thought, to which Christians give a touching expression in the lighted Christmas tree, pervades the three Masses of the feast. Very effective is the symbolism of light in the midnight Mass. (Collect: “O God, who hast made this most sacred night to shine forth with the brightness of the true light . . .”) For the second Mass the rising sun itself serves as a figure, and thus the joyful Introit begins: “A light shall shine upon us this day.” In the third Mass the idea of light is expressed also in the Gospel: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness.”

ADMONITION

Christians number the years of the present world from the birth of Christ and thus indicate how highly they value His coming. Our Lord's birth is the most significant event in the world's history. A Light risen in the darkness! Those who had

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succumbed to the death of sin, God brought back to life through the grace of Christ. Every Christian should therefore seek a special renewal of grace at Christmastide.

“On this day,” says a holy Father and Bishop of the Church, Gregory of Nyssa (died about 395), “the darkness begins to wane, and the lengthening rays of the sun crowd back more and more the ruling forces of night. And today a divine life gleams before the eyes of men: the Light which is Christ. Now, too, the powers of sin are forced to withdraw and diminish. See how the sun mounts higher in the sky and how its rays grow stronger. At the same time think of the arrival of the truest of all lights, who with the rays of the Gospel now enlightens the whole world.”

When Charles V entered the city of Augsburg, a child made a speech beginning with these words: “We bid thee welcome, O Emperor; may God bless thy coming.” Nearly two thousand years ago Another made His entry into this world, who was greater than the mightiest of earthly emperors. How much more reason did mankind then have to receive Him with the greeting: “We bid Thee welcome, divine Prince of Peace; may God bless Thy coming.” May we greet the divine Child in Bethlehem’s stable with a holy Christmas joy, and open our hearts to Him so that He may enter therein!

III. THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

The octave of Christmas is not, like the octaves of other great feasts, a simple continuation of the solemnity, but includes a number of saints’ days which should be considered and celebrated in relation to the feast of Christmas. They are the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, and the Holy Innocents. The other feasts—St. Thomas of Canterbury and St. Sylvester—do not stand in any relation to the idea of Christmas.

1. Feast of the First Martyr, St. Stephen, December 26. The name Stephen means “the crowned,” and thus signifies his victory. In faith and love he offered up to the divine Child the best he had, his blood and life. In the Breviary we read:

"Yesterday we were celebrating the birth in time of an eternal King; today we celebrate the triumphant suffering of one of His soldiers. Yesterday our King was pleased to come forth from His royal palace of a virginal womb, clothed in a robe of flesh, to visit the world; today His soldier, laying aside the tabernacle of the body, hastens to the heavenly palace as a victor." A detailed account of his life, of his speech in his own defense, and of his death, is given in the Acts of the Apostles. He is there portrayed as a deacon, a just man, a friend of the poor, a powerful speaker and a soldier of Christ. The account of his martyrdom is really touching: we see him as an angelic being; he sees the Son of God in a vision; we behold him falling upon his knees, commending his spirit to the Lord, praying for his enemies and dying (chs. 6-8).

God hardly asks us to undergo martyrdom—to profess our faith in Him by the shedding of our blood. He does ask, however, that we profess Him throughout our life. May we give testimony of Christ in word, in deed, in love, and through our calling in life. May we also, by our unswerving loyalty, merit the eternal crown, and thus make of our dying hour a personal Christmas celebration!

2. Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27. St. John was the disciple "whom Jesus loved." Because of his virginity our Lord permitted him to rest his head upon His breast at the Last Supper. To him it was that Jesus, when dying on the cross, solemnly gave Mary as his mother. St. John is the first among the saints who are specially known for their devotion to Mary. He wrote the fourth Gospel, in which he rises like an eagle to the heights of Jesus' divinity, and the Apocalypse or secret revelation, the only prophetic book of the New Testament. He lived to be almost 100 years old, and he is the only one among the apostles who died a natural death. In the year 95 A.D., he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, but through God's omnipotence his life was spared, and he was banished to

the island of Patmos. He was a "*martyr voluntate*"—martyr by will and testimony.

When in extreme old age the holy Evangelist was taken to church by his disciples, and was no longer able to address them at length, he used to repeat over and over the words: "Children, love one another." At last some of his disciples and brethren, tired of always hearing these words, said to him: "Master, why do you always repeat the same thing?" To this he gave the answer, so worthy of St. John: "Because it is the commandment of the Lord, and if this alone is kept, it is enough."

3. Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28. Cleansed in the baptism of blood (*martyres opere*—martyrs in deed), the Holy Innocents are the vanguard of all who, before arriving at the age of reason, die in their baptismal innocence. On this day mourning and melancholy mingle with the joy of Christmas-tide. The mothers of Bethlehem weep and lament. The Church, in sympathy, laments with them; and hence the liturgical color is violet (red on a Sunday), and the *Gloria* and the *Alleluia* are omitted from the Mass. Yet how happy were the children that received the death-blow intended for the Christchild!

Flowers of martyrdom all hail!
Smitten by the tyrant foe
On life's threshold,—as the gale
Strews the roses ere they blow.

First to bleed for Christ, sweet lambs!
What a simple death ye died!
Sporting with your wreaths and palms
At the very altar side!

(*Translation of Father Caswall*)

St. Stephen, the apostle and evangelist St. John, the Holy Innocents, St. Thomas of Canterbury (December 29), and Pope St. Sylvester (December 31), are the representatives of all the saints. Since their feasts come during Christmas

week, they, in the name of all the other saints, appear at the crib of the Christchild, from whom all holiness proceeds. They form, as it were, the new-born King's guard of honor.

4. **Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord.** *Holyday of obligation.* This feast is at the same time the octave day of Christmas. The divine Child sheds His blood for the first time, and is given the name of Jesus, i.e., Savior, Redeemer. His name and His shedding of blood indicate that He came to redeem us.

Coincident with the feast of the Circumcision is the beginning of the civil year; but with this the liturgy does not concern itself.

Since our Lord's Name is connected with the Circumcision, the Church has designated the first Sunday of the year for the celebration of the *Feast of the Holy Name*, the observance of which had been ordered by Pope Benedict XIII as early as 1721. Whenever no Sunday occurs between New Year's Day and Epiphany, the feast is celebrated on January 2.

The new year should be placed under the protection of the Holy Name of Jesus; for from Him comes all well-being.

IV. THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

With the feast of *Epiphania Domini*—the manifestation of our Lord—on January 6, the Christmas season reaches its highest point and comes to a close. The name "Feast of the Three Kings," sometimes applied to Epiphany, is not well chosen. This feast, one of the oldest and most prominent in all Christendom, has a vigil, also a privileged octave as an after-celebration, and liturgically ranks higher than the feast of Christmas. "Christmas is Christianity's intimate family-feast; Epiphany is the world-feast of the Catholic Church. The idea of the feast is not so much a scene from the child-life of Jesus, but rather the appearance, i.e., our Lord's manifesting Himself to the world as King of God's Kingdom." ⁵

In this feast the Church combines three very significant events

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of the life of our Lord, through which He was revealed to the world as the Son of God and the promised Messias:

(1) *The Adoration of the Magi*, who had come from the Orient, guided by a star, to pay homage to the kingly majesty of the Child of Bethlehem.

(2) *The Baptism in the Jordan*, at which God the Father officially proclaimed Him as the Son of God and the Teacher of the world.

(3) *His first Miracle at Cana*, through which He revealed His divine power and announced Himself to the world as the Ambassador of God.

“We are celebrating a great and holy day, glorified through a three-fold mystery. Today the star led the Magi to the crib; to-day water was turned into wine at the wedding of Cana; today Jesus submitted to baptism by St. John in the Jordan in order to redeem us” (Antiphon of Vespers).

The appearance of our Lord, however, is in the foreground of the feast—hence the emphasis is on the calling of all nations to Christianity.

Since our ancestors were heathens, we celebrate in this feast our own calling to Christianity. On this day we should give thanks to God for the privilege of having the Catholic faith. Let us renew that faith! Let us remember also the poor heathen, and help them by participating in mission activity!

Bethlehem! of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from heaven
Didst for us Incarnate bear.

Fairer than the sun at morning,
Was the star that told His birth,
To the lands their God announcing,
Hid beneath a form of earth.

By its lambent beauty guided,
 See, the eastern Kings appear;
 See them bend, their gifts to offer,
 Gifts of incense, gold, and myrrh.

Offerings of mystic meaning:
 Incense doth the God disclose;
 Gold a Royal Child proclaimeth;
 Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

Holy Jesu, in Thy brightness
 To the Gentile world displayed,
 With the Father and the Spirit,
 Endless praise to Thee be paid! Amen.
*(Breviary hymn,
 translated by Father Caswall)*

Usages of the Church. On the day preceding the feast of the Magi, water, incense, and chalk are blessed in some places. The Greek Church blessed water on this day as early as the fourth century; the Roman Church began this practice, in places, in the fifteenth century. According to an ancient opinion, often mentioned by the Fathers, Christ hallowed all waters of the earth through His baptism in the Jordan. With the blessed incense dwellings and stables are incensed. With the blessed chalk the names of the three holy Kings are written on the doors of homes to keep away evil influences. In many cathedral and collegiate churches, after the Gospel of the feast of the Epiphany, a chanter announces the dates on which Septuagesima, Ash Wednesday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and the first Sunday of Advent fall during the new year; in other words, the principal dates of the liturgical year.

ADMONITION

The Magi made offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts have a profound meaning. "They symbolize the nature and dignity as well as the purpose of the divine Child, and

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express the motive of the givers. With the gold they acknowledged Christ as King; by offering frankincense, the symbol of adoration, they professed their belief in the divinity of the Child; by presenting Him with bitter myrrh, they indicated that He was to suffer as the Redeemer. Moreover, since myrrh was used for embalming, it also signified the death and burial, and in general the humanity of the Redeemer.”⁸ Gold also symbolizes love; frankincense, prayer; and myrrh, self-denial.

We, too, ought to bring gifts to the Christchild—the gold of our love, the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of self-denial.

(1) As *gold* is a most precious and noble metal, so Christian love is the queen of all virtues and the greatest of the three divine virtues: “And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13, 13).

(2) *Incense* is the symbol of prayer. Its rising heavenward indicates the nature of prayer, for prayer means the lifting up of one’s heart to God. St. Augustine says: “What, then, is prayer but the soul’s ascent from earthly to heavenly things, a seeking of that which is above, and a desire for that which is not yet seen?”

(3) *Myrrh* symbolizes dying to oneself. Myrrh is a bitter herb—as disagreeable as the self-denial and mortification from which our human nature shrinks.

Whenever you see the names of the Magi written upon a door, remember also their offerings, and that you, too, should similarly bring a sacrifice to Christ. Our Lord will recognize us as His own by the sacrifices we make. He will repay us with a boundless and eternal reward.

V. THE SUNDAYS AFTER EPIPHANY

The great feast of the “Manifestation of our Lord” is followed by six Sundays that form a group by themselves. Should Easter come early, then not all of them are celebrated; but those which remain are then included after the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost. The mood of this season is one of joy and jubila-

tion. The Gospels of these Sundays portray Jesus as a model for youth, in the temple and in the home of His parents. They also picture Him at the beginning of His activity, as a teacher and wonder-worker.

Although these Sundays are not in concept or in historical representation a continuation of the Christmas idea, they nevertheless are influenced by it. They echo and recall the feasts of Christmas, especially Epiphany. Four ideas dominate these Sundays:

(1) Before us stands the divine King, who appeared upon this earth and whom we adore. (Compare the Introits of the Masses of these Sundays.)

(2) At Christmas our Lord founded the kingdom of light, which radiates outward and penetrates inward. Outward, since the six Sunday Gospels give us a whole history of the kingdom of God on earth; inward, since the Epistles emphasize the interior strengthening of God's kingdom through love.

(3) These Sundays also gradually lead over to the Easter season: the *battle of darkness* with light is beginning. (Compare the Gospels of the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays.)

(4) Finally, the typical Easter idea comes out on these Sundays—every Sunday is an Easter day.

In the liturgy of these Sundays we see how the word of the Prophet is fulfilled in our Lord: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart" (Isaias 61, 1).—"They all wondered at these things, which proceeded from the mouth of God" (Communion of the third Sunday).

O Jesu, King most wonderful!
 Thou Conqueror renowned!
 Thou sweetness most ineffable
 In whom all joys are found!

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When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.

O Jesu, Light of all below!
Thou Fount of life and fire,
Surpassing all the joys we know,
All that we can desire.

May every heart confess Thy Name,
And ever Thee adore,
And seeking Thee, itself inflame
To seek Thee more and more!
(*Father Caswall's translation
of a hymn by St. Bernard*)

VI. CANDLEMAS DAY

In the beautiful feast of Candlemas, February 2, we have the final echo of Christmas, and at the same time the transition to the Easter cycle. In accordance with its content it is, in the first place, a feast of our Lord; and in the second place, a feast of our Blessed Lady. Few other feasts are as rich in symbolism. Its mystery embraces three events:

(1) *The Presentation of our Lord* in the temple and His ransom with five shekels, in accordance with God's command regarding every first-born Israelite (Exodus 13, 2; Numbers 3, 46; 8, 16).

(2) *The Purification of the Mother of God*—again in accordance with God's law—which was completed with the visit to the temple on the fortieth day after the birth of our Lord, and the compliance with the purification and sin-offering (Leviticus 12, 2-8).

(3) *The Meeting of the Boy Jesus* and His parents with Simeon and Anna, which took place in the temple at the time of complying with the laws mentioned above (Luke 2, 22-32).

Formerly the individual liturgies emphasized first one event, then another, above the rest, whence we have the various names given to the feast.

In the Eastern liturgy the feast is called "*Hypapante*," i.e., meeting, because on this day the Son of God for the first time encountered a member of His priesthood in the temple. Christ, the King and Bridegroom, makes this entry into His temple (the Church); the Church (through her representative Simeon) gladly goes forth to meet Him.

The "meeting-motive" pervades the entire feast. The Invitatory of the feast says: "Behold, the Lord the Ruler cometh unto His holy temple: rejoice and be glad, O Sion! go forth to meet thy God!" A processional hymn says: "Festoon thy bridal chamber, O Sion, and receive Christ the King. . . ." The mediator of this meeting is Simeon; and for this reason the liturgy of the day tarries so long with this venerable man: "The aged man carried the Boy upon his arm, but the Boy was the aged man's King."⁵

On this day candles are blessed before High Mass, both those to be used in the services of the Church during the year, and those brought by the faithful to be used at home. Besides, a procession with lighted candles takes place.

A *burning candle* is a symbol of Christ, the Light of the World, who enlightens every man that cometh into this world (John 1, 9), and who floods every receptive heart with light and life, joy and consolation. Just as a burning candle is consumed and finally dies out, so did Christ sacrifice Himself in spreading His truth and grace.

The *procession* with lighted candles beautifully represents Christian life. The Light is Christ. We receive it of the Church, and carry it, like Simeon and Mary, in hand and heart, throughout this life on the pilgrimage to the holy place of heaven. Since this procession before High Mass originally took the place of an atonement procession, once customary in the city of Rome, violet vestments are worn. Its hymns are in part borrowed from the Greek liturgy. The first processional hymn, the old and cherished "*Adorna thalamum tuum, Sion*," runs as follows:

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Adorn, O Sion, thy bridal chamber
And receive Christ the King.

Greet Mary, the gate of heaven, who brings
The glorious King of the new light.
Though in her arms she bears a Son,
Begotten before the day-star,
She ever remains a virgin.

And Simeon, taking Him into his arms,
Declared unto all peoples
That He is the Lord of life and death,
And the Savior of the world.

ADMONITION

From the life of St. Francis we know that he often used to bid the flowers be silent, and to ask them not to reproach him so much. It would seem that on this day the blessed candles have a message for us. Like the flowers, the candles have their language also. They preach a most effective sermon, whose content, in the words of the Apostle, is: "Walk as children of the light!"

As the candles are ignited with another light and then give out their own light and burn, so should our souls, kindled with the light of Jesus Christ, beam in lovely radiance before the Lord. The prayer at the blessing beautifully expresses this thought: "O Lord Jesus Christ, the true light who enlightenest every man coming into this world, pour forth Thy blessing upon these tapers and sanctify them with the light of Thy grace; and mercifully grant that, as these lights enkindled with visible fire dispel nocturnal darkness, so our hearts illumined by invisible fire, that is, the brightness of the Holy Spirit, may be free from the blindness of all vice; that, our mental eye being purified, we may perceive those things which are pleasing to Thee and profitable to our salvation; so that after the dark perils of this world we may deserve to arrive at the never-failing light." How full of meaning! Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness and penetrates to the inmost heart; and we, enkindled by Him,

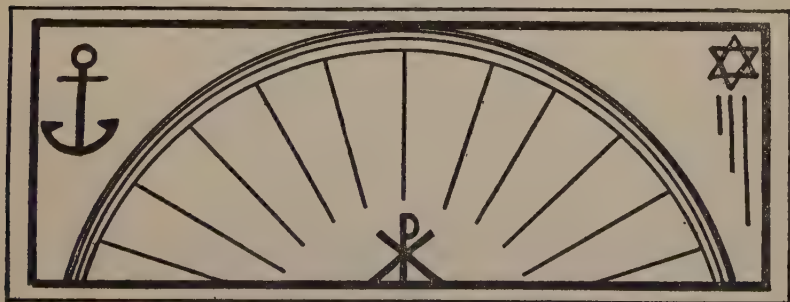
should be as the light of a burning candle, and thus walk in His light until we behold the light eternal.

With holy reverence we shall on this day receive the blessed candle from the hand of the priest, and see in it the symbol of Him whom at Christmas we praised as the Light of the World. But we shall also make an effort to walk as "children of the light." Then will the light of the candle at our death-bed one day shine brightly and consolingly upon our dimming eye; then will the gladdening light of heaven shine in the night of death, and greet us with its blessed rays in the land of glory.

VII. THE SATURDAY BEFORE SEPTUAGESIMA

During the Middle Ages it was widely customary to sing the last *Alleluia* of the Vespers of Saturday before Septuagesima with great solemnity, or, as the phrase went, "to bury it." There used to be a separate office sung at the departure of the familiar *Alleluia*, which was to be greeted again on Holy Saturday. One of the responsories of this special office, called *Officium Allelujaticum*, was the following: "May one of the Lord's good angels accompany you, alleluia, and in safety guide your ways: so that you may again return to us with joy, alleluia, alleluia!"

The two *Alleluias* which are to this day attached to the *Benedicamus Domino* of the Vespers before Septuagesima Sunday, and which are dismissed in a jubilant Easter melody, are one of the remnants of the medieval *Alleluia* liturgies.



(For explanation of design see page 185)

PART TWO

THE EASTER CYCLE

THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION

GENERAL SURVEY

I. The Season of Preparation.

A. The Time before Lent:

1. Septuagesima: Leading thought—you must go into God's Vineyard and perform the works of penance.
2. Sexagesima: Your soul is the field which the Lord will cultivate.
3. Quinquagesima: Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, admonishes you to make sacrifices.

B. The Lenten Season:

1. Ash Wednesday: The entrance gate to Lent.
2. The first four Sundays of Lent:
 Invocabit.
 Reminiscere.
 Oculi.
 Laetare.
3. Passiontide:
 Passion Sunday (Judica).
 Palm Sunday.
 Holy Thursday.
 Good Friday.
 Holy Saturday.

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II. The Easter Season.

A. Easter and its subsequent celebration:

1. Easter week.
2. The six Sundays after Easter.
3. The feast of the Ascension.

B. Pentecost and its subsequent celebration:

1. The vigil and the feast of Pentecost.
2. Pentecost week.

I. THE SEASON OF PREPARATION

“Upon the long night of winter the longer day of summer—the Easter festal cycle—follows also in the church year. The Sun of the Redemption which we have seen rising and have wondered at during Christmas, is awakening new life and growth in the Church and is calling us to a blessed work. At the same time this Sun is having a difficult battle to wage against death and darkness. But in power and mildness it perseveres and triumphs. In the radiance of its Easter victory it shines above the redeemed Church and brings to her the never-ending Easter day of the Redemption.

“The suffering and death, the resurrection and eternal transfiguration of Christ, form the historical background of the Easter cycle. Together with Christ, His mystical body the Church, enters upon His death and His transfiguration.”⁹

1. The Time Before Lent. The Easter cycle, like that of Christmas, has three divisions: a time of preparation (Lent), the festal season (Easter till Pentecost), and a final stage of blossom (the Sundays after Pentecost). The weeks before Lent form a special approach to the holy Lenten season. They are a period of earnest transition and of preparation, since the Church would not immediately and abruptly usher us into the most important time of the church year.

The pre-Lenten time, with Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and

Quinquagesima Sundays, is three weeks long. Septuagesima means the seventieth day before Easter; Sexagesima, the sixtieth; and Quinquagesima, the fiftieth—in accordance with the Lenten observance of former times. These Sundays have retained their names to remind us that in the first centuries of Christianity Lent began in some places on the seventieth, in others on the sixtieth or fiftieth day before Easter.

2. **Several changes** now take place at divine service:

(a) The vestments are *violet* in color, except when the feast of a saint is celebrated. The violet vestments tell us that a special time for contrition and holy sorrow has come.

(b) The songs of praise, *Gloria in excelsis Deo* and the *Alleluia* are omitted.

(c) Instead of the *Ite missa est* at the end of Mass, the *Benedicamus Domino* is said.

In this manner the Church wishes to prepare the faithful for the Lenten season and to inspire them in advance with a holy penitential zeal. When we are about to receive the ashes upon our heads, at the beginning of Lent, we should come with the right attitude and thoroughly prepared.

3. **The liturgy of the three Sundays** is rich in thought. It had its origin during the trying times of the migration of nations, and hence the hymns and readings have a profoundly serious character.

On the first Sunday the Introit of the Mass reminds us of the consequences of sin and of the consoling power of prayer: "The sorrows of death surround me, the pangs of hell encompassed me. In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy temple." Surely a touching introduction to the penitential season! Who is praying this Introit? St. Lawrence is praying it upon the gridiron: "In the sorrows of death and hellish pains" (at his grave the stationary service took place on this day); the Church is praying it, for she must often walk upon her divine Master's way of sorrows; finally, the Christian soul is praying it, uniting

THE EASTER CYCLE

herself with the suffering Redeemer and crucifying the flesh at the beginning of the Lenten season. The Apostle speaks of the race-course of salvation upon which we shall gain the prize of victory. Think of how St. Lawrence ran his course. Now I must begin the contest, for the palm of victory will not be mine without effort. The Gospel tells us of the workers in the Lord's vineyard. The parable contains a solemn invitation to us: Whatsoever may be the hour for you, God is calling you to His vineyard now. It is not yet too late—why do you stand idle? Do not look to others, do you yourself heed the call.

On the second Sunday the Missal has the inscription: "*Station at St. Paul's.*" On this day it was customary to go to the basilica of St. Paul outside the walls of Rome, where the Apostle was remembered in the prayer at Mass and his Epistle was read. This was done to encourage the faithful, who were near the place where the apostle suffered martyrdom, that they, too, according to his example, might work at their soul's salvation for the honor of God. Since St. Paul had sown the good seed of the word of God also in Rome, the Gospel of the Sower was fittingly read and explained.

The Introit of the Mass is an outcry of greatest distress (was it distress of war? or the migration of nations?). Today it is a cry for help of all the oppressed and persecuted: "Arise; why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away, and forgettest our trouble? Our body hath cleaved to the earth: arise, O Lord, help us and deliver us." In the Epistle we see St. Paul standing before us. It is a portrait of himself than which none can be more beautiful. It portrays all his afflictions and sufferings, but also all his weaknesses. He even glories in his own weaknesses so that Christ's power may be the more revealed. The Gospel of the Sower fits well into the time of preparation before Lent. It is now the soul's springtime; now it behooves us all to cultivate the soil of the soul.

In the Gospel of *the third Sunday* Jesus is speaking very earnestly to His apostles. As He was going with them to Jeru-

salem, He called their attention to the words of the prophets, and announced to them that all which the prophets had written concerning the Son of Man would be fulfilled in Himself. The Gospel has much to say to us regarding the preparation for Lent: the suffering of Christ is before us. The blind man upon the wayside is ourselves, who stand in such sore need of the Redemption. In the Epistle St. Paul sings the great canticle of love. Love is the greatest thing in the kingdom of God; this never-ending love, which beareth all and is all things unto all. In order to gain for us the kingdom of love portrayed in the Epistle, our Savior had to proceed on the way to sacrifice to Jerusalem. This way brought light to the blind man, and to us deliverance from the darkness of sin.

ADMONITION

“Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him,” says St. John (1 John 2, 15). At no other time is the battle between Christ and the world more vehement than during these days. During the so-called Shrove Tuesday or Mardi gras carnivals, hell and a wicked world employ all their seductive arts to corrupt immortal souls.

The Christian, too, may enjoy himself, for genuine good cheer and piety are near akin. Who, then, would prevent us from enjoying innocent Shrovetide pranks? No one. But everything should on such occasions be done with reserve and without loss of honor. Christian reserve and good manners should never be violated.

Hence we shall make an effort during these days to visit our altars, upon which, according to an ancient and pious custom in some places, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world is publicly exposed for adoration in atonement for the many outrages committed against God.

Whoever goes to Confession and Communion, and visits the

THE EASTER CYCLE

Blessed Sacrament wherever exposed, between Septuagesima Sunday and Ash Wednesday, and prays there according to the intention of the Holy Father, can gain a plenary indulgence (Clement XIII, July 23, 1765).

II. LENT

Having passed through the threefold antechamber of the pre-Lenten weeks, we now enter into the Lenten holy of holies. We have come to the most sacred season of the church year. What is its purpose? To give us divine life; for that is at once the essence and the goal of Christian piety—divine life as Christ has given it to the world through His suffering in the arduous battle against darkness.

1. **Meaning and Spirit of Lent.** The holy season of Lent is the great and solemn preparation for the feast of Easter. "Every Christian should prepare himself for his own Easter, i.e., for his own resurrection out of imperfection to perfection. A soul that is pious and God-fearing will celebrate such resurrection with an increased zeal for virtue, attained by means of prayer, fasting, and participation in the holy Sacrifice. The sinner should seek his Easter by means of true penance and reconciliation with God; the catechumens, through the reception of holy Baptism. All will rise to their new life and celebrate Easter by battling against sin, by showing new zeal for virtue, and by self-sacrificing love, as it is represented to us in the liturgies of the three pre-Lenten Sundays."⁶

Lent, therefore, has several purposes:

(1) The faithful should impose acts of self-denial upon themselves as penance for their sins, so as to rise at Easter purified and sanctified out of the grave of sin.

(2) They should consider what Christ had to suffer because of our sins, and thus learn effectively to hate sin. He who de-

voutly meditates upon the life and death of Christ cannot possibly commit grievous sins, says a great spiritual writer.

(3) They should refrain from worldly joys and should increase their devotions. Thus their love for our Savior will surely be increased and their souls be enriched with merit.

“Lent is intended to be the renewal of Christian life, and is the Church’s forty-day retreat. For this reason, animated by the spirit of God, we go with Christ into a mystical solitude to fast with Him, and this without leaving our everyday occupations. By fasting the Church understands not only abstaining from food and drink to a certain extent; she includes in it all actions that might serve us in the renewal of the life of grace. Truly in accordance with the spirit of the Church St. Benedict says: ‘During these Lenten days we should very carefully keep our life pure, and at the same time atone for the shortcomings of other times . . . should busy ourselves with fervent prayer, spiritual reading, contrition of heart, and self-denial; bring sacrifices freely and beyond our usual obligation to our loving God in the joy of the Holy Spirit; and thus, while we abstain somewhat from food and drink, from sleep, talking and jesting, we await the holy feast of Easter with a joy and desire that the spirit of God awakens in us.’ ”⁹

Henceforth more sparing let us be
Of food, of words, of sleep;
Henceforth beneath a stricter guard
The roving senses keep:

And let us shun whatever things
Distract the careless heart;
And let us shut our souls against
The tyrant tempter’s art;

And weep before the Judge, and strive
His vengeance to appease;
Saying to Him with contrite voice
Upon our bended knees:

Much have we sinned, O Lord! and still
We sin each day we live;

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Yet look in pity from on high,
And of Thy grace forgive.

(*Lenten hymn,*

translated by Father Caswall)

2. History of Lent. In the entire Western Church since the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great, Lent has begun on Ash Wednesday and has lasted forty days. Four days have been added preceding the first Lenten Sunday to complete the forty days. Before this time but thirty-six days were observed in Rome.

In the Old Testament the number forty was held to be a holy and significant number. For forty days and nights rain poured down in the penal and atoning deluge. For forty years the Israelites had to tarry and wander in the desert before making their entry into the Promised Land. Moses fasted forty days before he received the Law from God upon Mount Sinai. During a forty-day fast the prophet Elias made a pilgrimage to Mount Horeb, where God permitted the seer to behold a wonderful revelation (3 Kings 19). Our Lord Himself fasted forty days and nights in the desert before entering upon His public life and teaching. Thus, in holy revelation the number forty is intimately connected with penance and atonement, purification and grace.

For the better understanding of the Lenten liturgy, the custom of *stational churches* is of special significance. In earliest times it was customary in Rome for all of the clergy and people to go in solemn processions to a designated church, in which all then assisted at divine service. This was called the "Station" service. To this day the names of the churches in which such stations were held in olden times are given in the Latin Missal.

During Lent the eucharistic service was celebrated in a different church every day. The stational church also had much influence upon the selection of hymns and of excerpts from the Epistles and Gospels. For us, too, the stational church has more than mere historical value. Through it the unity and collective

character of Christ's Sacrifice is beautifully expressed. The Church we are actually attending becomes, as it were, the station church of the particular saint mentioned in the Missal, while the great family of the Roman Catholic Church, to which all of us belong, celebrates with the Father of Christendom the one holy Sacrifice upon the tomb of this saint.

3. Divine Services. The Church tries to make up for the abstinence from bodily food by providing spiritual sustenance in greater abundance. The liturgy of the Lenten season is richer in content than that of any other time during the church year. Every day has its own Mass; the feasts of saints are kept in the background whenever possible. Every day has its stational service with the station indulgences. During holy Mass God is glorified in a particular Lenten Preface, because "through our fasting He represses sin, lifts up the spirit, and graciously bestows strength and merit."

The liturgical color throughout Lent is violet. At all of the services, except on feasts of saints and on Laetare Sunday, the organ should be silent. The ornaments of altar, choir, and church, are simpler than at other times. Flowers and relics are little used for altar decoration. The deacon and subdeacon at High Mass do not wear the festal garments, the dalmatic and tunicle, but simple chasubles folded up in front.

Because of its joyous character, the angelic song *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is omitted during Lenten Masses. The *Alleluia* remains buried. In its stead a Tract is sung, which on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays is the repeated prayer of petition to God: "O God, repay us not according to the sins we have committed, nor according to our iniquities. O Lord, remember not our former iniquities; let Thy mercies speedily come before us: for we are become exceeding poor. Help us, O God, our Savior: and for the glory of thy Name, O Lord, deliver us: and forgive us our sins for Thy Name's sake." It is a touching cry of the

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distressed for grace and mercy. During its recital a genuflection is made. Another form of prayer peculiar to all Lenten week-day Masses is the *Oratio super populum*, i.e., the "Prayer over the people," which the deacon announces at High Mass with the words, *Humiliate capita vestra Deo*, i.e., "Bow down your heads before God!" Before the time of Gregory the Great (d. 604), this prayer used to be said also at Sunday Masses, and it may have served as a concluding blessing. Since the time of St. Gregory, however, it has been said only at the week-day Masses.

In the Middle Ages it was customary to hang a curtain between the altar and the choir. This curtain was ornamented with a picture of our crucified Lord, or with scenes from the history of His passion, and was intended to move people to penance. Popularly it was called the fasting or hunger cloth. This custom can be traced as far back as the ninth century.

ADMONITION

"The days of penance have come to us, to atone for sin, to save souls" (Antiphon). We all are sinners, hence for everyone *atonement* for sin is necessary. And we can atone with the help of the inestimable merits of Christ. "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13, 3).

Think how rigorously the Christians of earlier centuries observed the holy season of Lent. They fasted till evening and ate no meat; in fact, no food coming from animals. Today the fasting precept is much less severe, and many are dispensed from it altogether. Hence you must fast the more with your eyes, ears, and tongue. Lent must be a time of *self-denial* for every Christian. In the morning, therefore, rise promptly from your bed; often deny yourself a permitted amusement (dancing, noisy revels, weddings, and the like, are contrary to the Lenten spirit). Again, deny yourself a customary visit or entertainment. Should someone offend you in any way, bear it with patience. Reconcile yourself to your surroundings. Be zealous especially

in waging war against your chief failing. Every morning make a solid resolution to work against it; every evening examine your conscience, and make an act of contrition if you should have failed in it again. "Do penance!" This your Savior is saying to you.

III. ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday (*dies cinerum*) is the gate through which we enter upon Lent. The day takes its name from the ashes which are blessed and placed upon the heads of the faithful. At first only public sinners were sprinkled with ashes. Later, the ashes were placed on the heads of all the faithful.

Ashes point out to us how all earthly things change, even the life of man; and they signify penance for the guilt of sin which brought death into this world. The ashes used on this day are obtained from burning the palm-branches of the previous year. They are solemnly blessed by the priest and are then placed upon the heads with the words: "*Remember, O man! Thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return!*"

It is a very serious and solemn blessing. Over everyone the *sentence of death*, which God once spoke over all mankind, is pronounced anew. All worldly glory, health and a fine figure, riches, honors, satisfaction—all are but dust! Hate pride and vanity, for you too are dust! "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Ecclesiasticus 7, 40).

At the Mass the Church calls upon us to fast. The command comes from the prophet Joel's solemn trumpet: "Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather together the people, sanctify the Church" (Epistle). And in the Gospel the Church speaks of the purpose of fasting and of the manner of fasting that is pleasing to God: "When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad." Let us begin Lent with joy; for "now is the acceptable time, now are the days of salvation" (Breviary).

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AN OLD PRAYER ON FASTING

Almighty Father, eternal God!

So that human nature might return to its original destiny, Thou appointest to every part of the individual man what is needful:

The body is nourished with food, the soul is refreshed with fasting.

Without their proper nourishment the limbs can be of no service.

Without abstinence the ruling power of the spirit cannot survive.

According to this diversity of our being Thou leadest us in Thy wisdom.

And since the whole cannot subsist without the care of both parts of our being,

Thou commandest us in wise measure to partake of what preserves the vigor of both:

The body should not be without its sustaining food; and there should be discipline, through which the spirit is strengthened.

(*Leonine Sacramentary*)

IV. THE FIRST FOUR SUNDAYS OF LENT

Holy Church considers Lent "the soul's heroic progress through the purifying fire of penance." On Ash Wednesday the faithful take up their position on the Christian battlefield—" *praesidia militiae christianae sanctis jejuniis inchoamus*: Let us begin the Christian military service with holy fasting" (Collect), so that, being armed with penance, we may open the holy battle against the spiritual powers of malice. Christ, the Leader of all the faithful, who Himself has borne the degradation and pain of this battle (Gospel of the temptation in the desert), enkindles our courage. He is at once our protector and our refuge, for He is our God. He promises victory over the enemy in temptations here below, and He points to the final triumph in the Transfiguration (Gospel of the second Sunday of Lent).

FIRST FOUR SUNDAYS OF LENT

First Sunday of Lent (Invocabit): Christ waging war against Satan is our model.

Today is the Sunday of battle. We must be enrolled in Christ's military school. Just as our Savior overpowered Satan and his temptations after a fast of forty days, so is this holy time intended to make us fit to fight for Christ. Here Jesus Himself is our model and helper.

In her songs at Mass the Church promises us God's special protection and that of His holy angels for this holy battle. In them are found the consoling words of Psalm 90, the high canticle of confidence in God. This is the psalm of encouragement for every trying hour, and for us, throughout Lent, it is the song of battle and of victory:

He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob.

He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector, and my refuge: my God, in him will I trust.

For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word.

He will overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust.

His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night.

Of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark: of invasion, or of the noonday devil.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee.

But thou shalt consider with thy eyes: and shalt see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou, O Lord, art my hope: thou hast made the Most High thy refuge.

There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.

For he hath given his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways.

In their hands they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

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Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.

Because he hoped in me I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known my name.

He shall cry to me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.

I will fill him with length of days; and I will show him my salvation.

Second Sunday of Lent (Reminiscere): The reward of the warfare—the Transfiguration.

The second Sunday takes us to the Mount of the Transfiguration and unfolds a magnificent spectacle of light. Christ, lifted up and glorified upon the mountain, will also have us approach our transfiguration through His grace and His law.

“By fasting and self-conquest we follow our Savior upon the way of the cross. This is the way which in the end will lead us to our glorification with Christ in the happiness of heaven; for just as Christ’s glory was preceded by His suffering, so must our Easter be preceded by Lent.”⁹

The Sunday after Ember Saturday in former times had no special liturgy. When later the Ember night-service was transferred to Saturday morning, texts taken from the preceding week were selected to make up the Sunday Mass: the Introit, Gradual, Offertory and Communion verses of the preceding Wednesday; the Gospel of Saturday. The Epistle serves as a practical application of the Gospel—it points out the way of the transfiguration: “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*” During the following week this same idea is emphasized.

Third Sunday of Lent (Oculi): The result of the warfare: Christ the “more powerful” conquers the “strong one.”

The third Sunday presents to us another picture in outline. It is the Sunday of the casting out of Satan by Christ. On the first Sunday Christ appeared as the victor in a personal conflict with Satan. Today He appears as the representative of all man-

FIRST FOUR SUNDAYS OF LENT

kind in the victory He gained over Satan and his realm. By casting out Satan He gives us the Lenten pass-word: With the power of Christ cast out Satan completely from the forecourts of your soul!

Today's stational church is that of St. Lawrence Outside the Walls. Our gaze is directed to St. Lawrence, to that heroic champion of the kingdom of God, so that we recognize in him an example in conquering the "strong one." In us too the victory should be complete. Hence the Epistle calls us to battle vigorously against the works of darkness. He who falters in his courage begins to slip back into old ways, and "the last state of that man becometh worse than the first" (Gospel).

This Sunday used to be called Scrutiny Sunday. With it began the examination of those preparing for Baptism. The faithful were invited to examine the candidates and to report on their character. There were seven such examinations in all, the most important of which took place on Wednesday of the fourth week in Lent. At the same time the catechumens went through the exorcism, i.e., the abjuration of the evil spirit.

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare): The Gospel shows us our Food for the battle.

The Gospel of the wonderful multiplication of loaves, together with Jesus' walking upon the waters and His great speech at Capharnaum (compare John, ch. 6) points to the Blessed Sacrament, the great banquet of Christ, to which He invites all who have acquired the wedding garment through Baptism or Confession.

This Sunday has a special place in the church year. It is characterized by joy; the priest may wear a rose-colored chasuble; all of the texts are attuned to a joyous mood; the Mass begins with the word *Laetare*—"Rejoice!" Why?

A. The Ancient Church rejoiced in the rebirth of those soon to be baptized. It was a mother's joy—that of the Church. We, too, should rejoice with her and with the catechumens; for to

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this day the Church continues to experience the joys of a mother, and we, who have the good fortune of being her children, must rejoice with her.

B. With the following Sunday Passiontide begins. For this reason the Church would have a last joyous festival today. This Sunday is also called *Dominica mediana*, i.e., mid-Lent Sunday. Surely joy at this time cannot be taken amiss, since one-half of the arduous Lent is behind us, and we are daily drawing nearer to the sublime and joyous feast of Easter.

C. On this day we also celebrate the arrival of spring. The Church rejoices at the awakening of nature and sees in it a symbol of Christ's resurrection and that of the Christian soul.

It is customary on this day for the Holy Father at Rome to bless the Golden Rose, the symbol of spiritual joy, which he sends to some person of regal rank as an expression of special recognition. It may also be true that the blessing of the golden rose is in some way connected with the former popular Roman custom of celebrating the victory of summer over winter, at which celebration flowers and green garlands were used. The Romans used to bring the first spring roses to church on this Sunday. They also wore roses and presented them to one another, thus celebrating a kind of rose-festival.

ADMONITION

Be Strong in Battle!

Our life is a warfare. Just as the sky has its storm clouds and the sea its gales, so the life of man has its trials. "We live in a state of war as long as we are in this world" (St. John Chrysostom). "Here on earth," says St. Augustine, "the life of the just is a warfare and not a triumph."

This warfare taxes our strength in many ways. There is our daily work with its heavy and dulling monotony. Then there are deep-seated dissatisfactions within us which must be overcome, together with certain persistent and odious temptations.

Evil habits have shackled the soul as with chains of iron, from which it is difficult to escape. Our temperament, our own nature, our peculiar emotions often give rise to severe combats within the soul, and scarcely allow us to enjoy complete peace as long as we are on our pilgrimage from earth to heaven.

And yet we must not lose heart. We must turn to the Savior. He is our example in life's battle. In union with Him let us wage the good fight, and with His very weapons: fasting, prayer, application of the word of God. Grace will not be wanting to us in this time so full of grace: "Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation" (Epistle, first Sunday of Lent). The Church is eager to make her children conscious of joy and victory. Now, during Lent, most powerful means of grace are at our disposal in the Mass, in Confession, in contrition, and in fasting—truly the war-waging, suffering, victorious Christ Himself is with us.

Let us keep up our courage! Let us "labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. . . . For he also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Timothy 2, 3 and 5).

The complete reward will come only in another and a more beautiful world. There a crown and eternal bliss await him who "has fought the good fight"; a happiness compared to which all earthly joys are but a dream or a shadow. Then will the days of blistering heat be at an end: "Call forth the tired souls! The evening of rest is come. Give to them their reward!"

V. PASSION SUNDAY

The fifth Sunday of Lent is called Passion Sunday, for with it begins Passion Week. From this Sunday on, the Church is concerned almost exclusively with the suffering and death of our divine Savior.

A great change takes place in the liturgy. Hitherto it was the Christian people, penitent and beseeching pardon, who

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prayed in the alternating Mass chants. From now on, we hear the suffering Christ in the chants. In the Introit of the Sunday Mass we hear our Lord in His agony on the Mount of Olives. He is praying for a judicial decision between Himself and the unholy Jewish people and the "unjust and deceitful man" (Judas); in the Gradual and the Tract we hear Christ lamenting in His sorrows. These take us to the pillar of the scourging ("the wicked have wrought upon my back") and to the cross ("Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord").

In the Epistle our Savior is represented as the sinless High Priest who cleanses us from the guilt of sin with His own blood. In the Gospel is told how the hatred of the Jews grew to such an extent that they accused the Savior of having come to an agreement with Satan, and how they picked up stones to throw at Him. But with a divine dignity He emphasizes His sinlessness and His being from all eternity ("Before Abraham was made, I am"). They cannot prevail against Him, for His time is not yet come. He hides Himself from their eyes.

Just as the prophet Isaias accompanied us during Advent, so does the prophet Jeremias during Passiontide. He speaks to us in the Breviary and in part also at Mass. Jeremias prefigured the suffering Messiah. The prophet was hated and persecuted by his own people and so was Christ.

Outwardly, too, the Church indicates that Passiontide has begun by covering the crucifix and statues and pictures upon the altar with a violet cloth. It is an expression of profound mourning and greatest pain.

A celebrated painter wished to depict the sorrows of a mourning widow with his paints and brushes. Try as he would, he could not succeed. At last he covered the head and face of the sorrowing woman with a black veil as if to say: I am unable to depict this deep sorrow of soul.—Christ is the bridegroom of the Church. Now the Savior must suffer and die. Hence the Church puts on, as it were, a widow's veil. From now on, even the few remaining notes of joy are silenced. The

Gloria Patri is omitted and the psalm at the preliminary prayers is not said until Easter.

Regarding the meaning of covering the crucifix, there is considerable difference of opinion. Some liturgists try to find a reason in the *Gospel* of the day. It tells us that our Savior hid Himself from the Jews who wanted to stone Him. Others would see in it an expression of *deepest sorrow*, which the Church as the bride of Christ feels on beholding the Lord's sufferings. Others, again, find in it an expression of *reverence* in view of the great mystery about to take place upon the cross. This last opinion is held by Dom A. Neugart, O.S.B.: "Whenever the Church honors a holy mystery, she usually withdraws it from profane eyes by means of a veil. Thus she conceals the chalice and the tabernacle when the Blessed Sacrament is contained therein; likewise the Gospel-book, containing the word of God, at pontifical High Mass; and hence also, during these days, the holy cross. To interpret the covering of the crucifix as a sign of mourning is contrary to the spirit of the liturgy, for especially during these days it proclaims and glorifies the cross in the divine Office and in holy Mass."¹⁰

The practice of covering the crucifix and images of the saints upon the altar at Passiontide dates from the thirteenth century. The thought that the altar crucifix, often made of precious metal and ornamented with gems, and the brilliant pictures, really do not harmonize with the seriousness of the penitential time, may have given rise to the practice as we have it today.

Concerning the omission of the psalm *Judica* during Passiontide, the popular reason, that the psalm does not fit into the time of mourning and penance because of its joyous character, seems not too well grounded. In the first place the psalm is not a song of joy but a prayer of supplication made by a soul in agony. Hence the Church placed these words in the Introit of Passion Sunday and considers them as spoken by our suffering Lord. Then the psalm *Judica*—and this decides the issue—has its present place in the Roman liturgy only since the second half of the eleventh century. In the days of Charlemagne it was not in use. Later it was said occasionally in the sacristy or on the way to the altar. The Carthusians,

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Dominicans and Carmelites do not have it in their preliminary prayers even to this day. Hence it is not said at Requiem Masses, because these have retained the older simplicity.

ADMONITION

Throughout the entire church year we ought to attend the school of Christ. From our divine Teacher we should learn how to believe and how to live in a Christian manner. Especially during Passion time holy Church sends us to our Lord's school of suffering. From our suffering and dying Savior we too learn to suffer and to die as a Christian ought; for the true Christian should in all respects resemble Christ. During these days we should be able to say, with St. Paul: "For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2, 2).

Even if during these days we no longer behold our Lord bestowing His consolations, we shall try to bear more deeply within our hearts the picture of Him crucified. And therefore shall we now greatly honor the cross which the Church signally glorifies at this time. In honor of the holy cross the priest chants a special Preface at Mass, in which the following words occur: "Everlasting God, who didst set the salvation of mankind upon the tree of the cross, so that whence came death, thence also life might rise again, and He that overcame by the tree, on the tree also might be overcome, through Christ our Lord." The cross is for us the sign of salvation and the guide-post to eternal life.

Faithful Cross! Above all other,
One and only noble Tree!
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peers may be;
Sweetest Wood and sweetest Iron!
Sweetest Weight is hung on thee.

*(From Rev. J. Neale's translation
of the hymn "Pange Lingua")*

VI. HOLY WEEK

1. Name and Meaning of Holy Week. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week (*Hebdomada Sancta*) partly because of the deeds wrought in the mysteries of Christ's suffering, partly because of the demands upon one's conduct required by the worthy celebration of these mysteries. It is the greatest and holiest week of the church year, a time of the most abject degradation of Christ, but also the beginning of His glorification. It is also called the Great Week (*Hebdomada Major*), because the great mysteries of the Redemption were accomplished during its course. It is also called the Quiet Week, because noisy festivities are now out of place. But well in place are a quiet entering into oneself and all possible cessation of business (at least during the last three days). In German-speaking localities the week is called *Karwoche*, meaning Week of Sorrows (from the old German *Kara*—lamentation or mourning), because the Church during these days celebrates the suffering and death of our Lord.

During early Christian times a number of special observances were a part of the celebration of Holy Week.

A strict fast (the mourning fast). During the entire week only bread, salt, vegetables and water were taken (*xerophagia*). Some of the more zealous Christians used to keep from all eating or drinking for two or more days.

Penitential Acts, such as prayer, vigils, a hard bed, acts of mercy, and the like. Since the time of the first Christian emperors all the days of Holy Week were civil days of rest, and during the Middle Ages they were classed among the customary Church holidays.

2. Liturgy of Holy Week. The liturgy inclines towards a dramatic representation of all the events in the history of salvation. But now in Holy Week its dramatic power is more profound and more vivid than at any other time during the entire church year.

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“The whole development of the scheme of salvation is, as it were, acted out before the eyes of the faithful. Since Christ, the chief person in the action, is not present in human form, His person is represented in the many changing scenes by means of appropriate symbols: in the Palm Sunday procession by the bishop or the priest; on Good Friday by the cross; on Holy Saturday by the light of the candle, and so on. In the sense of this dramatic representation the Church prays on the Saturday before Palm Sunday that ‘the people consecrated to Thee advance in the affection of pious devotion: that, instructed by the sacred rites, they may be blessed with better gifts’ (Collect). Various nations, and centuries of time, have given their best in the creation of this work of art.”¹¹

Holy Week observances have their origin in apostolic times. Written testimony is extant, dating from the fourth century, regarding the magnificent celebration of Holy Week at Jerusalem. Here, in the very place where these mysteries were accomplished, this “Great Week” was observed with touching devotion and great solemnity by the inhabitants as well as by crowds of pilgrims. From the observances at Jerusalem many a detail was brought over to Western countries.

The entire week is devoted to the remembrance of the sufferings of our Lord. All liturgical prayers, chants, and readings are dominated by this mystery. The chronological sequence of events in its general lines is as follows:

- (1) The solemn entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the homage with which the Jewish people greeted him (Palm Sunday).
- (2) The decree of the council of chief priests that Jesus must die, and Judas’ betrayal of Him for thirty pieces of silver (Wednesday).
- (3) The Last Supper, the washing of the feet, the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus’ going to the Mount of Olives, His arrest, the flight of the disciples (Holy Thursday).

(4) Jesus' condemnation, crucifixion and death (Good Friday).

(5) Jesus tarrying in the grave (Holy Saturday).

VII. PALM SUNDAY

The divine service for Holy Week may be compared to a great cathedral. Palm Sunday is the magnificent entry; the first three days of Holy Week form the beautiful vestibule; the last three days are the mysterious holy of holies.

The liturgy of Palm Sunday embraces:

- (1) The Blessing of Palms.
- (2) The Procession.
- (3) The Mass.

The blessing of the palms and the procession are both in a joyous mood. The Mass, on the contrary, is entirely dominated by the profound impression made upon us by the heart-rending passion of our Lord.

1. **Blessing of the Palms.** The blessing of palms appears to have developed in the eighth century, while the procession with palms is certainly much older. The rite of blessing is a so-called *Missa sicca*—"dry Mass"; i.e., in its liturgical structure it resembles the rite of the Mass. Heartfelt rejoicings are repeatedly sounded throughout the blessing, which begins with the gladsome *Hosanna*.

The Epistle of the blessing depicts the journey of the Israelites from the beautiful region of Elim, where twelve springs gushed forth and seventy palms reared their branches heavenward, to the desert called Sin, between Elim and Sinai, where God sent them a wonderful manna. The Gospel tells us of the solemn entry of our Lord into the city of Jerusalem and of the homage of the people with their palm branches. The solemn blessing of the palm-branches follows, with its animated Preface (an ancient Preface of the martyrs), the

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Sanctus, and six prayers in which the meaning of the branches is further explained. The palms are then distributed, while the choir chants two antiphons, which recall the time when the young people of Jerusalem went out to meet the Savior, swinging their palms and greeting Him: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

This observance suggests the idea that we are here concerned with the variable parts of the formulary of those Masses which in some places were said at the blessing of palms. According to Beroldus such a Mass was celebrated, for instance, in the church of San Lorenzo at Milan, from which the archbishop went in procession to the church of San Ambrogio to celebrate pontifical Mass. We are told of a similar observance by the saintly Bishop Ulric of Augsburg.

2. **The Procession.** After the blessing of the palms the procession takes place. It reminds us of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

The earliest account of this procession we owe to the Gallic pilgrim Silvia (Eteria), who tells us regarding the observance at Jerusalem towards the end of the fourth century: "About the seventh hour (1 p. m.) on the Sunday before Easter, the people and the bishop assembled upon the Mount of Olives. There in the cave in which our Lord used to teach, Lessons (from the Scriptures) were read for two hours and hymns and antiphons were sung. At the ninth hour they proceeded to the top of the Mount, to the place from which our Lord ascended into heaven. Here again an appropriate reading, prayer, and song service was held. About the eleventh hour the Gospel of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was read, after which all, bearing palm and olive branches and chanting the *Benedictus qui venit*, proceeded down the Mount to the church of St. Anastasia where Vespers were sung and an *oratio ad crucem* was prayed."

From this account it is plain that the procession with palms

was first introduced in the church of Jerusalem. Later it was adopted by Rome. It seems that at first palms were merely held in the hands. Later the procession was added, and finally the solemn blessing of the palms took place.

The present practice most likely goes back as far as the fifteenth century, when in Germany and Italy the blessed branches were commonly considered a preservative against lightning. The character of the blessed palms as sacramentals appears to have been expressed in a prayer of blessing found in the Sacramentary of Bobbio (ca. 700). In fact the Church herself clearly voices the sacramental character of the blessed branches, when she asks, in the second prayer of the Preface, that whithersoever these branches are taken, they may obtain God's blessing for those who live there; or, again, in the fourth prayer, that the branches may help to secure the salvation of all the people.

During the Middle Ages the procession with palms had a rather dramatic aspect. The people proceeded from the principal church to another one (preferably outside of the city), where the blessing of the palms took place. From here the course of the procession led back to the principal church. On the way homage was paid to our Lord, either at the city gate or at the church, where a representation of Jesus crucified had been set up. Often a symbol of Christ accompanied the procession. At first the bishop was His representative. Later other symbols were used: the Gospel-book or an uncovered cross was borne on a litter. In some places our Lord himself in the Blessed Sacrament was carried in the procession. In German churches it was a common practice to take along a wooden ass mounted on wheels, upon which a figure of our Lord was seated.

In our times this procession through the streets of the city is merely hinted at. Today the procession still leaves the church but only to return immediately. Meanwhile the church doors are closed, after which an alternate chant between the singers within and those outside the church takes place. Bishop Theodulf of Orleans (d. 827) composed the beautiful Latin hymn which is used for this chant:

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All glory, laud, and honor
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's Name comest,
The King and Blessed One.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

The company of Angels
Are praising Thee on high,
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

The people of the Hebrews
With palms before Thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before Thee we present.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

To Thee before Thy Passion
They sang their hymns of praise;
To Thee now high exalted
Our melody we raise.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

Thou didst accept their praises,
Accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King.

E. All glory, laud, etc.

(Translation of Rev. John M. Neale)

At the end of the chant the subdeacon outside strikes the door with the shaft of the cross. It is opened to allow the procession to enter. This beautiful and thoughtful ceremony signifies that

Jesus, through His death upon the cross, reopened heaven which had been closed by sin.

3. **The Mass.** After the procession there is a sudden turn in the mood of the liturgy. The Mass now takes us into the very midst of our Lord's Passion. The picture of the blood-stained Man of Sorrows takes possession of our soul. The chants are the lamentations of Christ, who in His utter abandonment cries out to His heavenly Father.

Three men recite the prologue to this soul-rending drama of the cross:

(1) The king and prophet David—at the Introit, the Tract, and the Offertory.

(2) Paul, the preacher of the cross and teacher to the Gentiles—in the Epistle.

(3) The apostle and evangelist Matthew—in the chanting of the Passion.

David begins with the Messianic Psalm 21. The Introit and the Tract are made up in great part of this stirring psalm. Its relation to our Lord's suffering has been given by Christ Himself, for He pronounced its first words upon the cross, as St. Matthew tells us in the history of the Passion. The psalm contains several striking prophecies regarding the sufferings of Jesus:

O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?
Far from my salvation are the words of my sins.
But I am a worm, and no man:
The reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.
All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn:
They have spoken with the lip and wagged the head.
"He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver him;
Let Him save him, seeing he delighteth in him!"
For many dogs have encompassed me:
The council of the malignant hath besieged me.

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They have dug my hands and feet.
They have numbered all my bones.
And they have looked and stared upon me.
They parted my garments amongst them;
And upon my vesture they cast lots.

The second testimony is given us by St. Paul, the great preacher of the cross. In his Epistle to the Philippians he depicts, in bold outline, the picture of the Crucified. The passage is perhaps the grandest characterization of Jesus ever penned. The third speaker is St. Matthew in his history of the Passion. In many churches the Passion is dramatically chanted by three priests. During the singing, the singers and the people hold the palm branches in their hands as a profession of fidelity to Jesus the suffering King. At the words, "And Jesus yielded up the ghost," the clergy and the people kneel down in heartfelt gratitude to the crucified Savior for His bitter death.

ADMONITION

How wonderful, beautiful, and edifying must have been the first procession of palms! Men and women, animated with joy, are crowded around the Messias. The children with tender hands strewed flowers in His path. Over the outspread garments the Prince of Peace, seated upon a beast of burden, proceeded on His triumphant entry into the old and venerable city of Sion. Wherever the crowd got a glimpse of Him, they waved a very sea of palm branches to and fro. Then to the blue spring sky above ascended an exultant Hosanna. That was a day of great grace in Jerusalem, the day which the prophet Zachary, rejoicing in spirit, greeted when he cried out: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King will come to thee, the just and savior: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (9, 9). This was the day when He, the desired of all nations, came unto His own.

However, even before the end of that very same week, the noisy tribute of the people turned to deadly hatred. The same Jesus, who triumphantly passed through Jerusalem's gates a few days before, now stands before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. What a change! There He stands with shackled hands, bloody with the wounds of the scourging. His head is circled with a wreath of thorns, and His shoulders are covered with the purple mantle with which He had been mockingly vested as King of the Jews. Before the courthouse a mob is making a noisy and angry demonstration. As Pilate asks the Jewish people the eternally memorable question, "What shall I do with your king?" the mob cries out: "Upon the cross with Him! Away, away! Crucify Him!" Finally, amid the wild exultation of the excited rabble, Pilate pronounces the sentence of death. And Jesus, pursued by the curses and blasphemies of His own people, begins His way of the cross. Thus, upon the royal Palm Sunday procession, follows the procession of blood to Golgotha, i.e., the place of skulls; after a devout enthusiasm comes a storm of blind and raging passion.

Is not a similar thing often repeated in our own life? Today, like the Jews, we rejoice and are filled with enthusiasm for our divine Savior. But tomorrow, when the passions again awaken, the voice of temptation is heard once more, and the glittering fool's gold of forbidden joy again entices us. Then the mood changes and our Savior is cast out of the heart that loves sin. Just as the Jewish people before Pilate's tribunal once disowned their Savior and preferred a robber and murderer, so today thousands of Christians forsake their Savior and exalt that murderer of men, Satan, as the lord and ruler of their lives. "Away, away with Him!"—this is what every soul cries out that breaks faith with its Savior and sullies itself with grievous sin.

Hence, it is up to us to make ourselves independent of the moods and feelings of the moment, and to stand with firm

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and faithful will on the side of our Redeemer. One day Christ will come again and gather all nations together. Then will the faithful ones greet their Savior: "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" What a wonderful procession will then take place! In the lead the standard of the cross, then Christ with His angels, then all the saints, and with them we who have remained true to Him—all joyously entering the heavenly Jerusalem!

VIII. THE FIRST THREE DAYS OF HOLY WEEK

On Monday the liturgy takes us to the station church of the holy virgin Praxedis, Rome's great friend of the poor. St. Peter had often visited at her parental home during his stay in that city. There the prince of the apostles met with a love similar to that of our Lord in Bethany. The Gospel depicts Christ's anointing in Bethany by Mary, the sister of Martha. It was precisely this act of love which gave Judas the final occasion to carry out his betrayal. "Here, too, we come upon a splendid meeting of the morning dawn and the night of affliction. The converted sinful woman stands in opposition to the fallen-away apostle shrouded in gloom." ¹² In their contrast Mary and Judas, who are intimately connected with our Lord's suffering, stir us profoundly. The Mass of the day is linked up with the Thirty-fourth Psalm. In very ancient times this psalm was used especially as a cry of supplication against Judas, who is so embittered and despicable in today's Gospel.

On Tuesday the history of the Passion according to St. Mark is read. This practice first began in the ninth or tenth century. Today we also commemorate the denial of Peter. In no other Gospel is the denial so ignominiously depicted as in that of St. Mark. It may serve as the humble confession of the prince of apostles; for this Gospel, according to the oldest accounts,

is basically the preaching and the Gospel of St. Peter himself. The station church of today's Mass is that of Sancta Prisca upon the Aventine Hill. Its ancient environs are bound up with recollections of St. Peter and interspersed with monuments in his honor.

On Wednesday Mass used to be celebrated in the Church of St. Mary Major. It includes, in the first place, two Lessons from the prophet Isaias on Christ's suffering. The first Lesson shows us Jesus the divine worker at the wine-press: "Why then is thy apparel red? . . . I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me." Especially touching is the second Lesson, which depicts the "Man of Sorrows" upon whom God has placed the sins of mankind: "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins . . . led as a sheep to the slaughter, dumb as a lamb before his shearer." The Passion is taken from the Gospel of St. Luke. This particular Wednesday has been accorded special veneration since the earliest times. It is the day on which the chiefs of the Jewish people resolved that Jesus must die; and on this day Judas entered into negotiations with the enemies of our Lord. That marked the beginning of our Lord's sufferings.

IX. THE TENEBRAE

On the last three days of Holy Week the prayer service is in many churches observed in a solemn manner. Outstanding is the recitation of Matins and Lauds, which originally took place during the night towards morning, but was later anticipated on the preceding evening. To this day these recitations are called *Matutinae tenebrarum* (Matins in the dark) or simply *Tenebrae*.

These Matins have three nocturns, like those of feast days, and are noted for their depth and lyric beauty. They consist of psalms, of the Lamentations (plaintive songs) of the prophet Jeremias, and of lessons and responsories pertaining

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to Jesus' sufferings. They conclude with the pathetic song: "*Christ for our sake became obedient unto death,*" which daily increases in intensity. On the eve of Good Friday is added: "*. . . yea unto the death of the cross*"; and on the eve of Holy Saturday: "*. . . wherefore God hath exalted Him and hath given Him a Name above all other names.*"

1. The Matins of Maundy Thursday. The Matins provide matter for the meditation of the following day. For this reason the Matins on Wednesday evening contain the underlying idea of Maundy Thursday. This idea is Christ's Passion in its inner bearings, but also in its causes and workings:

(1) Among the Jews the death of Jesus was on this day a settled affair.

(2) Judas betrays his Master.

(3) The death-agony upon Mount Olivet completed Jesus' suffering in soul and will.

(4) The institution of the Holy Eucharist—the realization of Jesus' suffering in the present.

The time of the action is the evening of the first Maundy Thursday. Yet this does not mean that the action develops in time as in a real drama. The ideas of this celebration do not follow in chronological order. A picture of our Lord's suffering in Gethsemane, then a picture taken from the tragic events of the following day, then back again to the first scene—tonight's Matins is a mosaic made of prayers whose unity is the general theme of Christ's suffering, and the events of Maundy Thursday evening in particular.

2. The Matins of Good Friday. Underlying idea: Christ's death upon the cross. Even if the action does not proceed in historical succession, we can, nevertheless, take up the following as our central point: Jesus is hanging upon the cross. If the other

scenes of this day come to mind, we may consider them as so many pictures and reminiscences passing before our crucified Savior.

In consequence, the mood of Matins is a profoundly sorrowful one. The saddest and most mournful of the psalms of the psalter have been selected; and in the Lamentations we find a deepening of this mournful mood. The alternate chants, too, profoundly sorrowful but beautiful as well, are not arranged in the order of events. Every now and then the song of sorrow recalls certain details of the picture of suffering. Now it is the unspeakable abandonment, now the piteous complaint; isolated scenes of the past day and evening come to mind.

3. The Matins of Holy Saturday. Scene: Christ is in the tomb, and the Church is watching beside it and lamenting His death. He is resting in peace after the terrible contest. We see the marks of His intense sufferings upon His body. Yesterday the words of the alternate chants came, for the most, from the mouth of Jesus; today nearly all of them are plaintive cries of the Church. But in tonight's Lamentations hope begins to dawn. Today everything is quieter and more clarified. But towards the end of Matins the underlying sorrowful mood comes to the surface again. These Matins should represent the complaint of the Church because her divine Spouse has been taken away. Over the Matins hovers a certain charm which cannot easily be explained; one rather becomes aware of it as one lovingly lives into them. Perhaps it is attributable to their peculiar mixture of sorrow, hope, and restrained joy.¹³

The Tenebrae belongs to what is most beautiful and most striking in the Church's treasury of prayer. Especially noteworthy are the Lamentations of the prophet Jeremias which give the Tenebrae a certain gripping effect. These Lamentations, sorrowing over the downfall of Jerusalem, belong to the "most beautiful songs of the world's literature."¹² Every song con-

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cludes with the impressive cry: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God."

Example of a "Lamentation"

Here begins the Lamentation of Jeremias the Prophet (ch. 1, 1-5).

Aleph. How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!
how is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: the
princes of provinces made tributary!

Beth. Weeping she hath wept in the night, and her tears are
on her cheeks: there is none to comfort her among all them
that were dear to her: all her friends have despised her,
and are become her enemies.

Ghimel. Juda hath removed her dwelling place because of her
affliction, and the greatness of her bondage: she hath dwelt
among the nations and she hath found no rest: all her per-
secutors have taken her in the midst of straits.

Daleth. The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that
come to the solemn feast: all her gates are broken down:
her priests sigh: her virgins are in affliction, and she is
oppressed with bitterness.

He. Her adversaries are become her lords, her enemies are
enriched: because the Lord hath spoken against her for the
multitude of her iniquities: her children are led into cap-
tivity: before the face of the oppressor.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Be converted to the Lord thy God.

Peculiar to the Tenebrae is the *triangular candelabra* with
fifteen candles standing before the altar. Formerly, when the
Matins were yet recited during the night, it served to illu-
minate the church. At the same time it is the symbol of the
Light of Christ which gleams in the darkness of the Passion.
At Rome and in some other places the topmost candle is white,
as a symbol of the Savior. After each psalm one of the candles
of the triangle is extinguished, until the last alone remains.

During the *Benedictus* the light of the six candles upon the altar is also gradually snuffed out. Upon the repetition of the antiphon to the *Benedictus* the topmost candle of the triangle is removed and hidden behind the altar. After the oration a noise is made, whereupon the hidden candle is again brought forth and replaced. Then all rise and in silence leave the church.

The gradual extinguishing of the candles is variously interpreted. It may have had a practical origin: Matins were recited while it was still dark, and with the gradual approach of light the candles were as gradually snuffed out. Many now hold that the successive going out of the lights refers to the flight of the disciples and apostles at the beginning of our Lord's Passion. The last burning white candle, which is for a short time hidden behind the altar, signifies Christ whom His enemies believed they had put out of the way, but who rose again and appeared as the Light of the World.

With lying tongue have they spoken against me;
 With words of hatred have they surrounded me;
 In return for my love they turned my adversaries:
 But I gave myself unto prayer;
 And Thou hast heard me, O Lord my God!
 (*First Responsory*)

X. MAUNDY THURSDAY

On Maundy Thursday the institution of the Holy Eucharist is commemorated, whence also its other names: *Coena Domini*—the day of the Lord's Supper; *Dies natalis Eucharistiae*—the birthday of the Eucharist; *Dies calicis*—the day of the chalice.

The English name "Maundy Thursday" is taken from the words of the first antiphon sung during the ceremony of the washing of feet, "*Mandatum novum.*" The ceremony, observed to this day in some cathedral and monastery churches, is called the *Mandatum* from the words of our Lord: "*Mandatum novum do vobis*" (John 13, 34).

Our rejoicing at the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Maundy Thursday is mingled with mourning. The Church is

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mindful of our Redeemer's agony in the garden, of Judas' betrayal, and of our Lord's being apprehended. This mingling of joy and sorrow is found in the entire liturgy of this day.

The liturgy of the last three days of Holy Week differs in many points from that of the other seasons of the church year. Various reasons have been given for the differences, particularly the *sorrowful mood* of the Church. But not all of these reasons are tenable. Even the symbolism later on interpreted into the liturgical actions—beautiful and spiritual as it may be at times—is untenable if it is contrary to historical fact. More detailed reference to this will be made on the days following.

1. History of the Day. The solemn observance of Maundy Thursday comes down to us from the days of the primitive Church. It is a liturgical day of the first rank. The account of the pilgrim Sylvia has informed us about the day's celebration at Jerusalem towards the end of the fourth century. This pilgrim writes :

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Maundy Thursday, holy Mass was celebrated in the Church of the Sepulcher on Golgotha, during which all of the faithful received Holy Communion. About seven o'clock the people came together in the Eleona church on the Mount of Olives, where they prayed and sang hymns, until about eleven. They proceeded to the top of the Mount to continue with prayer and singing until the first cock-crowing of the following day (Good Friday). About this time—three o'clock in the morning—the gathering broke up, only to assemble again at the Garden of Gethsemane in a church which had 200 lamps. Here the Bishop pronounced a prayer, the people responded with an appropriate song, and the Gospel of Jesus' being taken prisoner (Matthew 26, 41 ff.) was read. Then in procession all went from the Garden to the city, and through it to the place of the crucifixion. Here the Gospel of Jesus' trial was read, and the bishop addressed the people, after which he

exhorted them to return at about seven o'clock for the veneration of the holy cross. On the way home, over Mount Sion, the people tarried to pray at the pillar of the scourging.

The liturgical observance of Maundy Thursday without doubt goes back to the first days of Christianity. It then contained four outstanding elements: The reconciliation of public penitents, the consecration of the holy oils, the Mass with the commemoration of Christ's Passion, and the washing of feet. In ancient Christian times two Masses were sung—one in the morning, the other in the evening in commemoration of the Lord's Supper. Before the latter, a meal was taken, just as our Lord did with His apostles at the Last Supper. This was still observed in the time of St. Augustine. The *Gelasian Sacramentary* (sixth to seventh century) mentions three Masses: one at the reconciliation of penitents, one at the consecration of the holy oils, and one in the evening in commemoration of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament and of the betrayal of Judas.

2. The Day's Solemn Observances. In the celebration of Maundy Thursday we distinguish the following parts:

- (1) The Mass of the Last Supper.
- (2) The consecration of the Holy Oils.
- (3) The stripping of the altars.
- (4) The washing of the feet.

3. The Mass of the Last Supper. In her office of the day the Church is more concerned with the suffering and death-agony of Jesus upon the Mount of Olives. But at the Mass the institution of the Blessed Sacrament is the central point. Since a joyful celebration, such as this great mystery deserves, is manifestly out of place during Holy Week, the Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi in honor of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

In conformity with the exalted character of Maundy Thurs-

day and of its liturgy, one of the oldest and most important basilicas of Rome was designated for the celebration of the Sacrifice—the church of St. John Lateran. Originally it was called the basilica of our holy Savior. It is really the papal cathedral church, and as such “the mother and head of all the churches of the city and of the whole world.” In this church is also kept what is believed to be the table of the Last Supper.

Since the Mass on Maundy Thursday is in a very special manner a celebration commemorative of the Last Supper, it has a twofold character: it is at once pervaded by joy and by mourning.

(a) *Joy*: The altar is ornamented, the crucifix on the high altar is covered with a white cloth, the priests appear for the Mass in white vestments; and the *Gloria in excelsis* is sung amid the ringing of bells and the accompaniment of the organ. All this is in happy remembrance of the wondrous love of our Lord, which prompted Him to give Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament. Few are the days of the church year which touch the heart as much as this one does.

(b) *Mourning*: Immediately after the *Gloria* the loud rejoicing is suddenly hushed, and the organ and the bells remain mute till the Easter *Gloria* on Holy Saturday. In the prayer of the Church the terrible name of Judas the betrayer is mentioned:

“O God, from whom Judas received the punishment of his guilt, and the thief the reward of his confession, grant us the fruit of Thy clemency: that, as our Lord Jesus Christ in His Passion gave a different recompense to each according to his merits, so He may take from us our old sins and give us the grace of His resurrection.”

This petition of the Church is singularly striking: Judas is rejected and the thief is saved—a warning and a consolation.

The Epistle contains the famous account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist as given in the first letter to the Corinthians. The Gospel relates how our Lord washed the feet of His apostles.

The remaining texts are almost entirely concerned with the bitter agony of our Lord. Two hosts are consecrated in the Mass: one for the Mass itself, another for Good Friday.

The customary kiss of peace is omitted out of abhorrence for Judas' traitorous kiss, for Judas misused this mark of friendship to effect the murder of the God-Man.

At the Communion all the priests present receive the Body of our Lord from the hands of the celebrant, for on this day but one Mass may be celebrated in each church. "The priest highest in rank takes the place of Christ. The others are the apostles, as it were, and receive Holy Communion from his hands; for the Mass is the celebration of the Last Supper." ¹³

The wooden clappers, which are now used instead of the altar chimes and tower bells, remind us of the earliest Christian times, when the ringing of metallic bells was yet unknown. The joyous and festive ring of bells seems rather out of place on these days of sorrow and mourning. For that reason it is the will of the Church that they remain mute till the *Gloria* of Holy Saturday.

After the High Mass the consecrated Host is carried in solemn procession to an adjoining chapel or side-altar of the church. This is ornamented with many flowers and lights. Here, throughout the day and night till the morning service of the following day, hours of adoration are held and the same veneration is accorded the Blessed Sacrament as at exposition.

In former centuries the Blessed Sacrament was conveyed in a simple manner, for which the liturgy had no specially prescribed form. Then, especially since the twelfth century, a more active eucharistic movement set in, and Christian consciousness of the great benefits of the eucharistic Presence became better developed. The simple conveying of the Blessed Sacrament gradually grew to a solemn liturgical procession; and the reposition became one of our special occasions for the adoration of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

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4. Consecration of the Holy Oils. In cathedral churches during Mass the holy oils are consecrated on this day. The consecration proceeds as follows:

After the Consecration of the Mass and before the final prayer of the Canon beginning with the words, "*per quem haec omnia*," the bishop first consecrates the oil for the sick (O.I.—*Oleum Infirmorum*). It is the purest olive oil, intended to strengthen our soul for the final contest before death through the sacrament of Extreme Unction, and to do away with the last hindrances, "the remains of sin," that hinder our entry into heaven.

This oil is also used at the consecration of patens, chalices, bells, and churches.

After Communion the bishop consecrates the oil of catechumens (O.C.—*Oleum Catechumenorum*) and the chrism (S.C.—*Sanctum Chrisma*). The former is used at the blessing of baptismal water, at Baptism, at Holy Orders, and at the consecration of altars. The latter, too, is used at the blessing of baptismal water, and at Baptism; likewise at Confirmation, at the consecration of a bishop, and at the consecration of churches, chalices, patens, and bells.

At this consecration twelve priests in white vestments, seven deacons, and seven subdeacons assist the bishop, in commemoration of the twelve apostles and the seven deacons of the primitive Church. After the consecration they hail the holy oils with a triple genuflection and the greetings: *Ave sanctum oleum*, and *Ave sanctum Chrisma*.

The consecration of the holy oils is most likely of apostolic origin and belongs exclusively to the bishop, the possessor of the full powers of consecration vested in the Church. It was specified for this day because the holy oils were necessary at the Baptism of catechumens on Holy Saturday. Since the oils should be consecrated only during Mass, and since Mass was not celebrated on Good Friday, nor on Holy Saturday, it

was necessary to consecrate them on Maundy Thursday. This practice was later retained, even after Holy Saturday was no longer the official time for the administration of the sacrament of Baptism.

It was this consecration of the holy oils, together with the Baptism of the following Saturday, that gave the joyful mood to Maundy Thursday. This mood was expressed by the singing of the *Gloria*, the wearing of white vestments, and by veiling the altar crucifix with a white cloth. In our own day we connect this mood of joy with the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

5. Stripping of the Altars. After the solemn procession in which the Blessed Sacrament is conveyed to an adjoining chapel or to an appropriately decorated side-altar, the choir prays Vespers, to which is appended the stripping of the altars. The celebrant, standing before the main altar, intones the antiphon, "*Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea et super vestem meam miserunt sortem*—They parted my garments amongst them; and upon my vesture they cast lots." Thereupon he removes the altar-cloths and the antependium; only the crucifix and the candlesticks remain. At the same time the psalm of agony (21) is prayed. After the high altar also the side-altars are stripped of their covering and ornaments.

Evidently the altar is here considered the symbol of our Lord, for His being stripped of His garments in order to be crucified is mentioned in the psalm prayed during the ceremony. In ancient times a stripping of the altars after Mass was a common custom. But the accompanying recitation of Psalm 21 raised the action to a symbolic one.

"Since the symbolic reference of the altar to our Lord was common to medieval symbolism, this ceremony is referred either to the abandonment of our Lord or to His being stripped of His garments at the crucifixion."¹⁴

6. Washing of the Feet. Since the time of Pope Pius V (1566-72) also the washing of the feet has belonged to the

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liturgical solemnity of Maundy Thursday. It reminds us of the unbounded love and humility with which the God-Man Himself did this for His apostles.

When our divine Savior had again taken His place at the table at the Last Supper after the washing of feet, He said to His disciples: "Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John 13, 12-15).

What our Lord said regarding the washing of feet was not to be taken literally, but figuratively, in the sense of true humility. It was but a concrete expression of the oft-spoken words: You ought not to rule, but to serve; and: He who would be the first among you, let him be as the servant of all.

The Church complies with this our Lord's mandate (*mandatum*) on Maundy Thursday, since on this day the washing of feet of the clergy, or of poor people chosen for the occasion, takes place in cathedrals and monastery churches. This concludes the Maundy Thursday ceremonies.

The pope washes the feet of thirteen priests vested in white; the bishop, of thirteen of the clergy or of poor people; abbots or other prelates, of thirteen old men. Christian kings and princes also used to do this. Just why the number thirteen was chosen is not very clear. Some say that the "thirteenth" apostle refers to St. Paul; others endeavor to explain this by referring to an old Roman custom in which the pope daily fed thirteen poor people in commemoration of a miracle which took place at the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great, who was accustomed to feed twelve poor people every day. To this number, it is said, Christ once joined Himself in the form of an angel. In commemoration of the event thirteen poor people were thenceforth fed on Maundy Thursday, and on the same day their feet were washed.

At the beginning of the ceremony the deacon sings the Gospel "*Ante diem festum Paschae*," which refers to the washing of the feet. Thereupon the officiating prelate removes his cope, girds himself with a white linen cloth, and begins the washing. He kneels before each one of the "apostles," pours water over his uncovered right foot, then wipes and kisses it. During the ceremony various antiphons are sung, of which the majority are taken from the account of our Lord's washing the feet of the apostles (John 13). The antiphon, "*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*—where charity and love are, there is God," is a magnificent praise of fraternal concord and charity. At the conclusion of the ceremony, after the introductory versicles, the prelate says a prayer asking for the interior washing away of all sins (*omnium nostrum interiora laventur peccata*), which the exterior washing of the feet symbolized.

ADMONITION

Pope Pius VII granted the following indulgences to all who on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at the repository altar, and there pray for some time for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff:

(1) A plenary indulgence on receiving Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday or on Easter Sunday.

(2) An indulgence of ten years and ten quadrages as often as the sepulcher is visited and the intention is made to go to Confession.

(3) A plenary indulgence on Maundy Thursday and on the feast of Corpus Christi after an hour of meditation or prayer (public or private) in commemoration of and thanksgiving for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, with Confession and Holy Communion either on the day or during the following week.

(4) An indulgence of 300 days on all Thursdays of the year—on the same conditions (Pius VII, April 6, 1816).

Maundy Thursday is not a holyday of obligation. Neverthe-

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less, a zealous Christian will go to church if it is at all possible. We should not always ask ourselves "What *must* I do?" but "What am I able to do?"

On Thursday evenings, especially wherever a bell is rung after the Angelus (the agony-bell), think in gratitude of the agony of our Lord on the Mount of Olives. But think of your own death-agony as well! It is sure to come some day. Say this prayer devoutly:

"We give Thee thanks, divine Savior, for having suffered the pangs of death and the bloody sweat for our sins. Humbly we beg of Thee, do not forsake us in the hour of pain and distress, but send us Thy heavenly angel, that he may strengthen us and lead us into Thy heavenly kingdom. Amen."

XI. GOOD FRIDAY

O truly solemn day of God,
Resplendent with the light of grace!
The day on which the Savior's Blood
Was shed to save our sinful race!
(*St. Ambrose, d. 397*)

Good Friday is one of the days of the church year the observance of which goes back to the primitive Church. In the earliest language of the Latin divine service, it bore the name, "The Friday of the commemoration of our Lord's death." This day's liturgy is most touching. The Church shrouds herself in deep mourning on beholding the terrible catastrophe of a deicide, at seeing her Bridegroom turn pale in death. But even in this sorrow the Church cannot keep back the joy of Easter; for now the living fount of the Redemption begins to flow for her, and in our Lord's death His transfiguration already begins to illuminate the whole world. Consequently, in the evening of this day there appears, as it were, the bright star of quiet and joyous confidence and peace with God in the sacrificial death of the Redeemer.

Protestants observe Good Friday as one of their highest feast days, in view of the unbounded grace made available through Jesus' death upon the cross. We Catholics do not undervalue this grace; we are mindful of it every day, especially during the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which Protestants do not have.

In the divine service of the morning three principal divisions are plainly discernible:

- (1) Lessons and intercessory prayers.
- (2) Uncovering and veneration of the holy cross.
- (3) The Communion celebration.

1. Lessons and Intercessory Prayers. Even the outward aspect of the sacred place preaches dejection and profound mourning to us. The altar, bared of its cloths and ornaments, stands naked and forlorn. The tabernacle is empty, as if God had gone out of His holy place, leaving it void and forsaken. Between the extinguished candles is placed on high the token of the day—the holy cross—at first still covered with a black cloth. The black vestments remind one of a death-day observance. So complete is this hallowed sorrow that on this day, the only one of the entire year, the pure sacrifice of the New Law, holy Mass, may nowhere be celebrated. Every holy Mass has something of a truly joyous solemnity about it—a joy which would not be in place on this day of mourning and penance.

(a) *The Prostration*: The priests approach the altar. Before it they lie prostrate to pray in quiet. It is the most impressive act of adoration possible. And in fact, when could a Christian, as he lies in the dust in profoundest self-abasement, have greater reason to adore the Savior than on this day? The heart is, as it were, so filled with sorrow and pain that one can hardly find words to utter a prayer. We can but lie prostrate at the foot of the cross upon which Another one hangs in place of ourselves.

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(b) *Lessons*: A single linen cloth is spread out upon the altar, instead of the three with which it must be covered for every divine Sacrifice. Thereupon all sit down to listen to the word of God read in the two lessons. They are of prophetic content, taken from the Old Testament. So that we do not give way to brooding and disconsolate sorrow, the mercy of God is first praised and implored. The Church prays that the suffering of Christ may not become to us a curse, as it did to Judas, but a means of salvation, as it did to the thief at the right of Jesus. The lesson taken from the ancient history of the Jewish people, the description of the first Easter-lamb, is especially striking. It is the prophetic introduction to the sacred history of the Passion.

(c) *History of the Passion*: Now follows the great Gospel of the day, the history of the Passion, as related by St. John, who was an eye-witness of the great event. Picture after picture, in this simple and yet imposing account, passes before us: the seizing of Jesus in the Garden of Olives; the judicial examination before Annas and Caiphas; the denial of Peter, the trial before Pilate, the terrible scourging, the crowning with thorns, the perverted judgment, the carrying of the cross, and the crucifixion. And when the narrative has gone as far as the account of the final overwhelming moment—"And He bowed down His head and gave up the ghost"—all present, as if overcome by grief, fall down upon their knees and in adoration think gratefully of their dying God.

(d) *Intercessory Prayers*: Thereupon the Church extends her arms to pray for the salvation of all her members and for the whole world. Hardly could the Church raise her voice to heaven with greater hope of being heard and of receiving grace than at the foot of Christ's cross and while being sprinkled with His saving Blood. Every answer to prayer here on earth indeed comes in virtue of the sacred Blood which was shed on this day. Because Christ died for all men, the Church now prays for all.

Priest: "Oremus—Let us pray!"

Deacon: "Flectamus genua—Let us bend our knees!"

Subdeacon: "Levate—Rise!"

Thus every prayer is introduced. The genuflection is omitted at the prayer for the Jews, because they bent their knees before our Savior in mockery.

2. **Unveiling and Veneration of the Cross.** There is probably no ceremonial of homage in any nation now extant that goes back so far in time as the Church's ceremony of homage to the cross. It had its beginning shortly after the first three centuries of the Christian era, when the faithful could again celebrate divine service openly without fear of death. The true cross of Christ had already been found at Jerusalem to the great joy of all Christendom. Eagerly the people desired to see and venerate this treasured sign of divine love. It was then ordained that once a year, on Good Friday, the cross be exposed for public veneration. From this time on, immense crowds of pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem during Holy Week. Since comparatively few were privileged to have this happiness even once in a lifetime, the Church decreed that a similar ceremony be introduced in all churches. At first the custom was limited to those churches which had a particle of the true cross of Christ; but finally it became general. Indeed, Christ Himself is to be honored, not merely the wood of the cross. And surely we can pay Him homage by means of a copy as well as by means of the actual cross.

The priest puts off the chasuble and, in the sight of the faithful, gradually uncovers the image of the Crucified. At the same time he thrice sings in a solemn melody, and each time in a higher tone: "*Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit!*—Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the Savior of the world!" The choir answers, "*Venite adoremus—Come, let us adore!*" Then the priest places the uncovered cross upon a pillow at the altar-steps and, after removing his shoes,

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approaches it with a triple genuflection, and reverently kisses the cross.

The priests take off their shoes as Moses once did on the holy mount; they make a triple genuflection before the cross, and gratefully kiss the sacred wounds. Meanwhile the choir chants the *Improperia*, the plaintive reproaches of the crucified Savior against the Jewish people. Unfortunately these complaints also strike many Christians, particularly all who crucify Jesus by committing grievous sins.

O people mine! What have I done to thee?
Have I afflicted thee? Do answer me.
From Egypt's heavy bonds I loosened thee—
A cross in gratitude thou givest me!

The cross is finally taken up and placed upon the altar, while the choir intones the triumphal song: "We adore Thy cross, O Lord, and we praise and glorify Thy holy resurrection: for by the wood of the cross the whole world is filled with joy."

3. Celebration of Communion. After the veneration of the cross, the Sacred Host, which had been preserved in a chapel or in the tabernacle of a side-altar, is carried in procession to the main altar. The candles are lighted and the *Missa praesanctificatorum* begins; i.e., the Mass of the Preconsecrated Gifts. This is not really a Mass, since there is no Consecration. Today there is a break in the successive chain of Sacrifices of praise, which day by day follows the sun in circling the globe. It reminds us of that day on which the sun became darkened, as if in mourning, and day was changed to night. The Sacred Host and the altar are incensed, whereupon the *Pater noster* is sung. How impressive our Lord's prayer with its seven petitions appears on this day, on which our divine Intercessor Himself, who taught it, prays for us for three hours with outstretched arms! The Host is then elevated, and finally the priest communicates.

Thus the Church solemnizes the death-day of her Lord and Spouse in exalted mourning. As her children, we have joined her and have sought to lose ourselves in the bitterness of her sorrow.

In some places the so-called *Burial* follows the celebration of Communion. In solemn procession the Blessed Sacrament is conveyed to an ornamented sepulcher and there exposed for public adoration. This observance is foreign to the Roman liturgy—it is a specifically German custom.

Present-day sepulcher ceremonies with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament are *praeter rubricas*, but not *contra rubricas* (not against Church regulations), unless they interfere with the principal divine service and detract from the liturgy of Good Friday.

ADMONITION

When Noe offered up a sacrifice to God after the deluge, a rainbow formed a richly colored bridge between earth and heaven, as a sign that God would nevermore allow a flood to inundate the whole earth. On Golgotha stands the cross of Christ, upon which our Lord offered Himself as a sacrifice. This is the sign of reconciliation, and wherever it faces us, there in Christ's blood it shines as a token of divine mercy. Every cross upon an altar, on our rosaries, along the wayside, and in the fields calls out to us: "The earth is filled with the Lord's mercy."

There are three important points in the history of the world: the beginning, the middle, and the end. In the beginning, a sin was committed in Paradise; at the end will come the judgment of the world; and midway stands the cross of Golgotha. Hence it is not hell that stands at the central point of Christianity, but the sign of mercy, the cross of Christ. "*O crux ave, spes unica!*" rightly sings the Church: "O cross, our only hope, we greet thee!" Whosoever is saved, has the cross to thank for his salvation. *In cruce salus!* is an old Christian saying: "In the cross is salvation!" The Apostle says: "Through Him all things

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should be reconciled, He making peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1, 20).

When one day our lack-luster eyes stare vaguely in the struggle of death and our souls shudder at the trial of our departing hour, then the realization of former sins may weigh heavily upon us and our good deeds may appear as trifles, and even sinful. Someone will then offer us the cross to kiss for the last time, and confidence will return. "*Qui latronem exaudisti, mihi quoque spem dedisti.*—Who to hear the thief didst will, us with hope didst also fill."

When the heart has ceased to beat, the cross will be placed into our hand as a sign of our confidence in the mercies of Jesus Christ. And upon the grave's mound the cross will be planted, that our body may rest in its peaceful shadow and await the coming of the resurrection. *O crux ave, spes unica!*

XII. HOLY SATURDAY

The Lord has stood the ordeal; He has gone to His sacred rest; He has descended to the holy souls in the regions below; "His tomb is glorious"—such are the salutary messages of the Matins for today.

Holy Saturday, or the "Holy Sabbath" as it is called in the language of the Roman Church, is *our Lord's day of rest*. His mortal life upon earth and His exceedingly painful sufferings for our redemption are over. This day was formerly the most quiet of all the days of the church year; and because of this stillness it was an expressive symbol of our Lord's sleep in the tomb.

As the day of our Lord's resting in the sepulcher, Holy Saturday formerly had no divine service. Not until nightfall was the liturgy of the Easter mysteries celebrated, the greatest and most solemn liturgy of the entire church year. Later this was transferred to the morning of Holy Saturday. To understand these solemnities we must realize their nocturnal character.

Following are the Holy Saturday ceremonies according to present-day custom :

- (1) The blessing of the fire and of the Easter candle.
- (2) The twelve prophecies (Lessons) of the Old Testament.
- (3) The blessing of the baptismal water.
- (4) The Litany of the Saints.
- (5) The celebration of holy Mass.

1. Blessing of the Fire and of the Easter Candle: (a) *The blessing of the fire* forms the introduction to the solemnities. It is much more recent than the blessing of the Easter candle, and may have had a Germanic origin. It is first met with in the eighth century among the Franks. Germanic peoples, in heathen times, were accustomed to light bonfires in honor of Ostara the goddess of spring, and of Baldur the god of light. To give this observance a Christian meaning the blessing of fire was instituted. Pope Leo IV (847-855) included it in the Roman liturgy.

The striking of fire from a stone is likewise of Germanic origin. It was believed that such a fire is purifying and sanctifying. Heathen bonfires combined a petition for a good harvest with the paying of homage to the divinity. Even today certain practices remind one of this custom ; thus, for instance, small crosses are made from the charred wood and placed in the fields, or the ashes of the burnt wood are strewn upon the land.

Already during the Middle Ages the fire struck from a stone was unanimously referred to Christ, who had said: "I am the light of the world." Christ is likewise called a stone, or "corner-stone" (Psalm 117, 22). But now the spark drawn from the stone is an even more vivid symbol of our Lord. It signifies Jesus Christ who comes forth from the rocky sepulcher despite the immense stone sealing its entrance.

After the blessing of the fire the five grains of incense for the Easter candle are blessed. The number five reminds us of the

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five sacred wounds which our Lord retained even after His resurrection.

A candle is lighted from the newly blessed fire. The deacon, who is to carry the new light into the house of God and announce the glad tidings of the Resurrection, puts on a white dalmatic—the garment of joy. The procession to the sanctuary follows. The deacon carries the staff with the triple candle. Thrice the procession halts, and each time the deacon lights one of the candles; each time, as the herald of Easter, he announces in a successively higher melody the joyous tidings: “*Lumen Christi*—Light of Christ.” “*Deo gratias*—Thanks be to God,” is answered by the choir. This procession to church with the triple candle became customary since the thirteenth century and is an artful unfolding of the idea of Easter and of light.

(b) *Blessing of the Easter Candle*. The deacon, having arrived at the altar, begins the blessing of the Easter Candle amid the inspiring strains of the *Exultet*. This blessing is the outstanding feature of the Easter vigil.

The blessing of the Easter candle comes from the first centuries of Christianity. At first the formulas for the blessing differed. The text now in use dates from the seventh century and is found in the Gallican sacramentaries. St. Augustine is its reputed author. Originally the deacon composed his own Easter message (*Laus cerei*); and apparently with every year it was made up anew. By the ninth century the text now in use had nearly supplanted all the other formulas.

The *Exultet* is “the triumphal song of the Redemption,” “the Church’s canticle of canticles to glorify the Redeemer’s Resurrection.” Here we have one of those sublime solemnities found only in the divine services of the Catholic Church. Here we can only listen, meditate, and enjoy, and thank God in quiet humility. “Among the sublime songs, of which there is certainly not a scarcity in the Church’s liturgy, there are not many in which such holy enthusiasm, exceeding joyousness, aspiring thought,

force and swing of language, depth of ideas, magnificence of expression, and power as well as majesty of manner, unite into one as they do in the *Praeconium paschale*." ¹⁵

The Easter candle is a beautiful symbol of the risen Savior. The white wax of which it is made signifies the pure and stainless humanity of Jesus. The five grains of incense, which the deacon inserts into it in the form of a cross during the blessing, remind us of His five sacred wounds. The solemn lighting of the candle and the flaring up of its light represent our Lord's Resurrection. Before the candle is lighted, it symbolizes the God-Man still in the confinement of death; lighted, it represents Christ gloriously radiant as He emerged from the grave. At the same time, the candle indicates that the risen Savior is the true Light from heaven, which illumined the night of sin and of death, which changed darkness into day, and which shines before the pilgrim on his way to heaven as the true pillar of fire, like that wonderful shaft of fire which once went before the children of Israel in the desert. The Easter candle is set up on the Gospel side beside the main altar, where it remains and is lighted during divine service until Ascension Day.

2. The Twelve Prophecies. The risen Savior is not only the light; He is life and the Giver of life, of that new supernatural life which He merited upon the cross, sealed by His resurrection, and imparts in Baptism to all men of all ages. Although all sacraments increase supernatural life, the sacrament of Baptism, above all, awakens the spiritually dead to the supernatural life of grace. The Baptisms administered on the eve of Easter formerly constituted an outstanding feature in the liturgy of the Church.

First comes the reading of twelve prophecies from Holy Scripture, which in their grand array represent to us the effects of Baptism and the greatness of the Christian state of life. Their

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purpose is to bring before the minds of those to be baptized and of the faithful in general the greatness of the grace of which they will become or have become partakers in Baptism.

The number of these readings differed formerly. Now we have twelve, the number determined by Pope Pius V. "The series of texts as such has no immediate prophetic character. If the Church designates them today as 'Prophecies,' it is to be understood that the text is made to refer to the event of the day, i.e., to the ensuing Baptism."¹¹ Upon each reading follows a prayer asking God to impart the grace of the Redemption.

1. *The Creation of the World* (Genesis 1 and 2). Through Baptism we enter the Church, the new creation, and the new paradise of the Redemption (*Sacramentum regenerationis*—Sacrament of Rebirth).

2. *The Deluge* (Genesis 5-8). This deluge is a symbol of Baptism, the waters of which purify of sin and at the same time establish new life. The saving ark is the Church which we enter through Baptism. (*Janua ecclesiae*—Doorway of the Church).

3. *Abraham's Sacrifice* (Genesis 22). In the new Isaac sacrificed but living again lies the foundation of Baptism. Through Him we are redeemed and have become the true children of Abraham.

4. *The Passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea* (Exodus 14 and 15). This is a well-known prototype of Baptism, more apparent as such in ancient Christian times when Baptism by immersion was administered. Led by the new Moses, we journey away from the slavery of Egypt, through the Red Sea of Baptism, and into the promised land of holy Church.

5. *The Call of the Prophet Isaias to Belief in the Messiah* (Isaias 55). We are called to the waters to be reborn therein as the children of God. A covenant with God, a covenant filled with God's own promises—that is Baptism.

6. *The Praise of Divine Wisdom* (Baruch 3). We are chosen with the new Israelites to walk with Christ in the luminous ways of wisdom. Hence we are bid to come to the "fount of wisdom" which is held out in Baptism as a solace for the soul that is seeking truth and happiness.

7. *The Vision of the Field of Death* (Ezekiel 37). The resurrection of the corpse-strewn field of Ezekiel is a symbol of the spiritual resurrection of all flesh. With new life in and through Christ we arise out of corruption as new and immortal beings.

8. *Israel's Downfall because of Sin and God's Bestowal of Grace upon the Remaining Saved* (Isaias 4). Not upon all sinners is grace bestowed, but only upon the elect. Among these God will dwell, having washed them clean of sin in Baptism. He will lead them safely to the realm of glory.

9. *The Journey out of Egypt and the Easter Lamb* (Exodus 12). Christ is our Easter Lamb. We who are signed with His Blood are at tonight's mysterious "passage of the Lord" liberated from the bondage of Pharaoh and Egypt, of Satan and the world.

10. *Jonas' Sermon on Penance at Ninive* (Jonas 3). Jonas is a well-known figure of Christ. Our Lord rises from the three-day seclusion of the sepulcher and in Baptism bestows the supernatural life upon all who turn to Him.

11. *Moses' Farewell Discourse* (Deuteronomy 31). Christ, as the new Moses, once more brings home to us His law before the "entry into the promised land," and in Baptism allows the dew and rain of His grace to drop down upon us (Compare the Tract).

12. *The Three Youths in the Burning Oven* (Daniel 3). This is an admonition to steadfast fidelity and to courageous profession of faith, even unto martyrdom.

This reading and prayer service, at which explanations were also given, is a classic example of early Christian catechetics.

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3. **Blessing of the Baptismal Water.** After the twelfth prophecy the procession to the baptismal font takes place, with the cross and the Easter candle at the head. During this time the catechumens about to be baptized sing the following deeply significant Tract:

“As the hart panteth after the fountains of water,
So my soul panteth after Thee, O God.
My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God.
When shall I come and appear before the face of God?
My tears have been my bread by day and night, whilst it
is said to me daily: Where is thy God ” (Psalm 41, 1-4)

During the solemn singing of the Preface that follows, the priest blesses the baptismal water. As the divine Spirit hovered over creation and over Christ at His baptism in the Jordan, so He does also over this water, making of it a stream which irrigates the paradise of the Church (From the Preface).

With his hand the priest divides the water into four parts, sprinkles it in the four directions of the world (“Go ye into the whole world and baptize”), breathes thrice over the water in the form of a cross (breath signifies the Holy Spirit), dips the burning Easter candle into it, breathes once more over it, then pours the oil of catechumens and the chrism into it, and mingles the two. With that the anointing (by means of oil) and the sanctifying (by means of the chrism) of the baptismal water are completed.

The blessing of the water is not absolutely necessary for the validity of Baptism. Ordinary water would suffice. The Church blesses it, however, to bring home the meaning and significance of Baptism, so that the sacrament may be approached and received with greater respect and devotion.

The most solemn function of the blessing of the baptismal water is the triple immersion of the burning Easter candle into the font. At each immersion the priest sings in a higher tone: “May the virtue of the Holy Ghost descend into all the water

of this font." After the third time, he keeps the candle in the water, breathes about it in the form of a Greek *psi*, ψ (the "Greek symbol of the soul"), and proceeds singing: "And make the whole substance of this water fruitful, and capable of regenerating." The meaning of this ceremony is obvious: The risen Christ with His transfigured wounds, the same Christ who died for us on Good Friday, Christ our new light and our new life, at Baptism imparts to the water its virtue: "*Hic est qui baptizat*—He it is who baptizes."

The blessing of baptismal water is a very ancient rite. References to it are found as early as the year 200 A.D., and St. Basil writes that it originated in the days of the apostles. The oldest preserved formula of such a blessing comes down to us from the fourth century. The one in use today appears in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and hence was adopted at least as early as the seventh century.

In the days of early Christianity Baptism was administered to the catechumens in connection with the blessing of the water. The newly baptized then were given white garments, which they wore until Low Sunday, called *Dominica in albis* (*depositis* or *deponendis*) in the Latin Missal, and on which day they put them aside. Even to this day, if there are catechumens to be baptized on Holy Saturday, the sacrament is administered after the blessing of the baptismal water.

4. **Litany of the Saints.** After the blessing of the water the clergy and assistants return in procession to the sanctuary, whereupon the Litany of the Saints is chanted. It is a prayer of intercession for those baptized, and reminds us of the communion of saints.

"The litany is indeed a prayer for the newly baptized, but not for them alone. In behalf of all the faithful *Ora pro nobis*, not *Ora pro eis* is said ('Pray for us' and not 'Pray for them'). Through Baptism new members have been gained for the kingdom of God and now the Church is constrained to voice the consciousness of the communion of all her members

—the saints in heaven, the militant upon earth, and the suffering in purgatory.”¹¹ At the same time the faithful are reminded of the fact that at their Baptism they were received into the communion of saints, and that in consequence they are to live a holy life.

On arriving at the altar, the priest prostrates himself so as to give also an outward impressive form to the intercessory prayer. Such a prostration appears to have been of frequent occurrence in former times, especially, if not always, before the celebration of holy Mass.

5. **The Resurrection Mass.** We come to the culmination of the liturgy of the day—the High Mass in white vestments. It is replete with the marks of joy in the Resurrection of Christ. The *Gloria* is sung again, and this amid the ringing of bells and chimes; once more the organ is heard; and we again sing out the joyous *Alleluia* which had remained silent since Septuagesima Sunday. Everything is now animated with joy and jubilation.

“Out of the yearning Litany of the Saints and its last *Kyrie* appeal, a profoundly humble imploring of mercy at first unfolds itself at the beginning of Mass. Thereupon, in the *Gloria*, an unbounded joy at the Resurrection breaks forth amid festive song, the playing of the organ, and the ringing of bells. So exalted and unbounded is this joy that its surging waves seem to vie with the rushing of the eternal stream of bliss: for indeed the feast of Easter and the grace of Easter are the beginnings of heaven within us.”¹⁶

The angels of heaven announced the birth of the Redeemer to mankind in the words of the *Gloria*. Now the Church uses the *Gloria* to announce the second birth of the Savior, since He assumed life anew in the Resurrection. Once it was the angelic congratulations to man because of the Savior’s birth; now it is the Church’s felicitations to the newly baptized on their reception into the sonship of God.

After the Epistle the solemn *Alleluia* is thrice intoned, and the choir sends its echo, as it were, into all the countries of the

earth. In cathedrals and abbey churches the subdeacon goes to the throne of the bishop or of the abbot and announces to him the words which soon after resound throughout the church and fill every heart with joy: "Venerable Father, I announce to you a great joy; it is the *Alleluia*." The bishop then arises and thrice sings the *Alleluia*, each time in a higher tone; and each time it is so repeated by the choir.

The Mass of Holy Saturday is really a baptismal Mass, since there is a repeated reference to the preceding Baptism. It is a thanksgiving Mass for the newly baptized, who are now for the first time invited to partake of the banquet of the Lamb. May it be for us too a baptismal Mass and at the same time a renewal of our baptismal vows!

The Mass of Holy Saturday comes down to us from the earliest times; it has therefore all the earmarks of the Mass as celebrated in the primitive Church. Hence it is also wanting in some of the parts which appear in the liturgy of later centuries. It has no Introit, no *Credo* (which was first included in the sacrificial rite in the eleventh century), no Offertory verse, no *Agnus Dei*, and no Communion verse.

Ever since the time the celebration was transferred from Easter night to the morning of Holy Saturday, a short Vespers has immediately followed the Communion.

"O truly blessed night, which alone deserved to know the time and hour in which Christ rose again from the grave! This is the night in which, destroying the bonds of death, Christ arose victorious from the grave. For it would have profited us nothing to have been born, unless Redemption had also been bestowed upon us" (From the *Exultet*).

ADMONITION

Even if the magnificent liturgy of Holy Saturday is no longer observed with the splendor of the primitive Church, it should nevertheless remind us of Baptism and of the renewal of our

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baptismal vows, as well as of giving thanks for the grace of Baptism. Although the former catechumenate no longer exists, the ancient liturgy of Holy Saturday is rightly retained to this day because Baptism, too, is a resurrection to a new and better life.

The Apostle says: "With Christ Jesus we are buried together by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in the newness of life" (Romans 6, 3f.). Accordingly, the resurrection of our Lord could formerly be represented in its full significance in the administration of holy Baptism. Now the liturgical prayers, readings, and functions of Holy Saturday serve to encourage and urge us to celebrate within ourselves a resurrection out of sin to the grace of God, out of the imperfect to the perfect life. "Christ, our Easter Lamb, is slain. Therefore let us celebrate Easter, not with the old leaven of sin and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (Cf. 1 Corinthians 5, 7f.). "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, . . . not the things that are upon the earth" (Colossians 3, 1f.).

What God has bestowed upon us in Baptism is worth a thousand times more than all the riches of the world. Let us thank Him for it, especially now during these sacred Easter days! There is something venerable about the baptismal register of an old parish. In it are inscribed the names of grandparents and of distant ancestors for centuries back. Many names are still to follow. Taken altogether, they form the great congregations of Jesus Christ. And where are all these now whose names are inscribed in the book? Your name, too, is written in the baptismal register of your parish. In the book of the dead may it appear in golden letters, and at the last judgment may that same name be read by the angels of heaven with great joy from the book of life!

XIII. EASTER

"This is the day the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein." Repeatedly this call is heard today and throughout the octave of Easter. Easter is the "feast of feasts" (*solemnitas solemnitatum*), the climax of all feasts of the church year.

This is of all feast days the crown,
 Scintillating in Christ's great victory.
 Gloriously Christ overcame
 The harmful rule of the arch-fiend.
 From its power He hath freed us,
 Paying the price with His Blood—
 We are redeemed!
 To our Deliverer let us give thanks!
 Thou art the Christ, the King of kings!
 Joyous throngs of angels
 Make up Thy retinue.
 With kindly eye, good Savior,
 Look down upon the throngs of men
 Striving to live for Thy glory.
 For their bitter lot
 Thou didst show such infinite pity
 That it drew Thee down
 To the dust and the agony of death.
 Then the shackles of hell Thou didst shatter
 Through Thy glorious Resurrection.
 And since the time of Thy hanging upon the cross
 Thou rulest mightily over all the earth's tribes,
 Almighty Son of God!

*(From the Sequence of
 St. Notker, d. 912)*

1. **History of the Feast.** Easter is the oldest of Christian feasts. A special institution of it was not necessary, since it is an adoption and continuation of the Jewish Pasch of the Old Testament. Besides, the most important Christian events, the death and the resurrection of our Lord, were connected with

it; and the old Pasch typified the sacrificial death of Christ. Among the converts from Judaism the feast of Easter was rather an outgrowth of the Jewish Pasch; among gentile Christians it grew out of the Sunday resurrection observance.

In the early Christian centuries the designation of the time of Easter gave rise to differences so great that at times they assumed the character of a schism (Easter controversy). The Churches in Asia Minor always celebrated Easter with the Jews, no matter on what day of the week it fell. Besides, they celebrated the day of our Lord's death as their chief feast. The Churches of the West, however, celebrated the Resurrection as their chief feast, and this always on a Sunday, the first after the fourteenth of the month Nisan. The Council of Nice (321) finally put an end to these controversies. According to its ruling the day of our Lord's death is always to be celebrated on a Friday, and the resurrection always on a Sunday—the Sunday after the fourteenth of Nisan. The first full moon after the spring equinox is to determine the fourteenth of Nisan. To this day Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring; consequently it cannot come earlier than March 22, nor later than April 25.

2. Meaning of the Feast. In the liturgy Easter signifies the resurrection of our Lord as well as the regeneration of all men, and the incorporating of all in Christ, who is the glorious King of the world (*victor Rex*).

A. *Easter is the chief of all feasts*—the center of the entire church year about which all other feasts group themselves like the planets about the sun. "As the Mother of our Lord differs and is distinguished from all other saints," says St. Augustine, "so the feast of Easter is the greatest of all feasts. It is as it were the mother of all others, regulating and hallowing them."

B. *Easter is the most glorious of all feasts*—the *Alleluia* feast, for *Alleluias* resound on this day in heaven and upon earth. It is the day of divine omnipotence and wisdom, "the day the Lord hath made," as the holy singer testifies. On this

day divine Omnipotence rent asunder the portals of the sepulcher; divine Wisdom on this day revealed and gloriously justified itself, and put to naught all the plans of the enemy.

“Behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed” (Apocalypse 5, 5). The lamb is become the victorious lion. Death’s seal He has broken, and the power of hell He has crushed. As Samson, the sun-hero (the name Samson means *sun* or *light*) once lifted the gates of Gaza from their hinges, so did the Redeemer shatter the gates of the realm of death. As Jonas went forth from the belly of the great fish on the third day, so did the Son of Man go forth out of the bosom of the earth. And as Daniel came out of the lions’ den unharmed, so did Christ triumph over His enemies on coming out of the grave. Stronger than Samson, more wonderful than Jonas, more glorious than Daniel, He went forth from death and the grave to the life of bliss and immortality.

C. Easter is the most joyous of all feasts. On this day the crucified Jesus, rising out of the grave, soars aloft in a heavenly aura of victory on the heights of Jerusalem. The stone is gone, the grave is empty, the bonds of death are loosed.

Our minds are not centered in the Resurrection alone. According to the idea of primitive Christianity, Easter includes the death and victory of the Redeemer, hence *Redemption and Resurrection*. Easter is “the day of the Lord,” because on this day our Lord rose from the dead and the world began a new life. It is the resurrection day of the whole world.

Therefore the Church is rejoicing—we hear the *Alleluia* again and again. The priest sings it, and just as often it comes re-echoing from the people. *Alleluia*, which means “praise the Lord,” is the Church’s joyous greeting. “Praise to Thee, victor on Golgotha, alleluia!” At no other time does the Church rejoice so much as on the feast of Easter. It is the highest feast of joy—joy in our Savior, joy in the Resurrection, in the Re-

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demption, in the new life. "This is the day the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Psalm 117, 24).

3. **Liturgical Celebration of the Feast.** "The liturgy of the day is one of classic and almost austere beauty. Words fail us when we try to express our deepest emotions. For this reason the liturgy desists from using the various devices of art; the Mass is dominated by one thought only: Christ is risen."¹³

In the Introit our risen Savior stands before us and speaks: "*Resurrexi*—I am risen." It is Jesus' song of entry upon the earth and His morning prayer on the day of His resurrection. In the *Epistle* the Apostle bids us feast, for, as the Gospel announces, "He is risen." Between the Epistle and the Gospel occurs the glorious festal Sequence, the *Victimæ paschalis*: "Forth to the Paschal Victim, Christians, bring your sacrifice of praise." This Sequence, a dialogue between the Church and Mary Magdalen, was placed in the Mass during the Middle Ages. Towards the end of the Mass the Church prays: "Christ our Pasch is immolated, Alleluia: therefore let us feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!" The leaven signifies changeableness, the fall of man, and sin. Through Baptism Christians have become the sinless bread of Christ. At Rome the Church appropriately celebrates Easter Mass in the great Church of St. Mary Major (*Maria Maggiore*), so as to offer the resurrection greeting to Mary: "*Regina coeli lætare*—Rejoice, O Queen of heaven!"

The custom of presenting *Easter eggs* to one another is full of meaning. Just as a living thing can come forth out of the stone-like shell of the egg, so Christ came forth living out of the rocky grave, and so shall we one day go forth living out of our graves. In many places *foods* (eggs, meat, also bread) are blessed, because certain foods were forbidden during the strict fast. The people again receive these foods from the hands of the Church with a blessing. The "*Easter rabbit*" most likely has its origin in the heathenish spring festivals, and has

no reference to the Easter mystery. The *Easter fires* remind us of Christ, the Light of the World. *Lumen Christi! Deo gratias!*

ADMONITION

What does the day of Easter demand on our part? "If we again review this greatest day of our Lord and ask ourselves, What is the risen Savior seeking, what does He ask of the world, of enemies, of friends, above all, of the Church, all the glorious events of Easter day call in answer, and every leaf of the Gospel book announces audibly: *Faith—Faith—our Savior is seeking and is asking of us a full and living faith!* And if we look back upon the whole life of Jesus, what was His first demand? *Faith!* Page on through the Gospel up to the feast of the Ascension, and repeatedly you will find Jesus seeking, asking for, praising and glorifying faith. At the last He complains of the weakness of faith, and His last act is the *commission of the Church as the teacher of faith.*"¹⁶

The Church's choir prayer begins with the words: "The Lord is truly risen, Alleluia!" And in the Sequence of the feast the Church is jubilant: "*Scimus Christum surrexisse a mortuis vere*—We know that Christ indeed has risen from the dead." The apostle St. Paul considers this truth as the groundwork of all our faith. From it rays of light proceed hither and thither upon all life. God said: "Let there be light!"—And there was light! Light has indeed gone forth on Easter day. The Light has conquered the darkness. As on Christmas day the Light shone into the darkness, so now, after the mournful days of Holy Week, the Sun of the Resurrection rises victoriously to shine for eternity. Easter is the great *victory-feast of faith.*

XIV. EASTER TIME

1. Easter Week. Formerly the feast of Easter extended over three days for the faithful, and over the entire week for the newly baptized, who wore their white garments till Saturday. It is for this reason that every day of the Easter week has its

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own Mass. The newly baptized attended Mass and the other divine services daily in their white garments.

The liturgy of Easter week, with that of Holy Saturday, is perhaps the most beautiful and most classical of the entire church year. In the first place it turns towards the newly baptized, the pride and joy of the Church. The fundamental idea, "Christ and the Church," turns chiefly about three motives: Resurrection, Baptism, Holy Eucharist.⁹

2. **Low Sunday.** Low Sunday is thus named to emphasize the contrast between the great Easter solemnity and the Sunday which is its octave day. In the language of the Church it is called *Dominica in albis—depositis*, because on this day the neophytes who had been baptized on Holy Saturday appeared at Rome for the first time without their white garments, and in the Christian Church of Africa for the last time with the white garments. The name befits the Sunday even today, because in many places children receive First Holy Communion on this day.

3. **The Sundays after Easter.** There are six in all. On these Sundays most appealing portrayals of the living Savior are brought before our minds. On the first Sunday Thomas celebrates his Easter aftermath (John 20, 26ff.), "a private Easter, as it were, for the man so slow to believe." On the second Sunday Jesus shows Himself as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep (John 10, 11ff.). The picture of Jesus taking the lost sheep home contains the life history of every Christian in four chapters: lost, sought for, found, taken home!

The third Sunday begins to look forward to the feasts of the Ascension and of Pentecost. Christ's glorification is not completed in the Resurrection. He will go to the Father to take possession of His eternal throne, from which He will send down the Consoler, the Spirit of Truth, upon His Church. Consequently the *parting words* of our Lord to His disciples are read in the Gospels of these Sundays: "A little while, and you shall

not see me"; "It is expedient to you that I go"; "I came forth from the Father and am come into this world; again I leave the world and go to the Father"; "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot now bear them. But when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will teach you all truth."

XV. THE ROGATION DAYS

The fifth Sunday after Easter is called Rogation Sunday. It leads us over to the Rogation days, and its Gospel teaches us splendidly how to pray. Prayer in the name of Jesus is heard. We are assured of that by the divine Truth Himself. This precious assurance should also console us at the departure of our Savior. "Pray, that your joy may be full."

1. History of the Rogation Days. The three Rogation days before our Lord's ascension are not outgrowths of the Easter liturgy, but later introductions. In the middle of the fifth century St. Mamertus, Bishop of Vienne (d. 475), ordered that the faithful do penance and hold Rogation processions on the three days preceding the Ascension, so as to renew courage in people then downcast by reason of many different misfortunes. These prayer processions soon became very popular and began to be observed in many places. The Synod of Orleans (511) prescribed that they be adopted for the Frankish kingdom. Clergy as well as lay people often went barefooted in these processions. Even Charlemagne and the saintly countess Elizabeth of Thuringia gave pious examples in this respect.

In Rome the Rogation days were first accepted in the reign of Pope Leo III (795-816). For a long time the Romans opposed their introduction because of the Easter season. The fast which was originally observed during such special days of prayer gradually fell into disuse since it was not in agreement with ecclesiastical tradition to fast during Easter time. In connection with these Rogation days and Rogation processions, other days

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of prayer and pilgrimage arose in various dioceses, according to various needs, motives, and in response to graces received. In the liturgy such Rogation processions are called *Litaniae minores*, i.e., lesser, in contradistinction to the greater ones (*Litaniae maiores*) observed on April 25. The latter were customary already before the time of St. Gregory the Great, and most likely were set for this day by Pope Liberius (352-366).

On April 25 (VII Kal. Maias), in the days of heathen Rome, a solemn procession took place for the success of field crops, especially to ward off grain blight. This procession formed on the Via Flaminia, the present Corso, and went to the fifth mile-stone, i.e., to the Milvian Bridge. There a sacrifice was made to the god Robigus to ward off blight (*robigo*). The Church turned these heathen "*Robigalia*" into a Christian prayer procession. The idea of God blessing the field crops has remained.

With the feast of St. Mark, instituted much later in the West, this procession has no particular connection. It is held on April 25, even when the feast of St. Mark must be transferred to another day.

2. Significance of the Rogation Processions. The purpose of these processions is to implore the mercy of God, so that through Jesus Christ He may keep from us all evils of soul and body, and give to the plants of the field growth and increase. In spring, when the fields are becoming green and there is promise of a good harvest, but also the possibility of destruction through frost or hail, the processions are a reminder to feeble man to turn with humility and confidence to the Giver of all good.

"In the fields and on the prairie, on the mountains and in the valley, plant life is recommencing; there is sprouting, greening, budding, growing. The tiny seed unfolds its powers of growth within the bosom of the earth so as to bring forth fruit, and everyone awaits the new blessing. It is no secret that it is not the earth alone which brings forth fruit, and not alone the busy hand of man on which the increase de-

pend. We know that it is God who gives the increase. His blessing is the prime requisite for success.

“What, then, is more in place—now that the seeds and plants have been entrusted to the earth’s bosom to bear fruit—than that we send up our prayers to heaven and merge all our petitions into one, so that the importunate prayer of a hundred thousand hearts may ascend on high to the Father of mercy? What is more fitting than that the Church, during these days before Ascension, once more beseechingly embraces the feet of the Savior, ere He departs, so that in His name we may obtain the blessing of the all-merciful God?”¹⁷

3. **Formation of the Processions.** A. The cross is in the lead. By joining the procession and following the cross, we make a public profession of our faith in Jesus crucified; we tell all the world about it. We confess that our hope rests in the cross, and that we expect our prayers to be accepted through Him who died for us on the cross. The cross is the King’s ensign according to the words of the Church:

*Vexilla Regis prodeunt,
Fulget crucis mysterium,
Quo carne carnis Conditor
Suspendus est patibulo.*

The banners of the King float high;
Bright shines the cross’s mystery;
In the flesh this gibbet bore
Him who would all flesh restore.

We are following the cross. This is indeed the way which leads us homeward, the spring from which our blessings flow, the key which opens heaven. *O crux ave, spes unica*—We greet thee, sacred cross, our only saving hope!

B. Two lights are borne beside the cross. Light has a prominent place in the liturgy. Think of the Candlemas procession on February 2: “*Lumen ad revelationem gentium*—a Light unto the revelation of the Gentiles.” Think of the light on Holy Saturday: “*Lumen Christi*”—“*Deo Gratias!*” There is not a

more fitting symbol for the preaching of truth than light. "*Ego sum lux mundi*—I am the Light of the world." The light of the Gospel is carried farther and farther into the world among mankind, and ever richer and deeper it lights up the souls of men—*cross and light*!

C. The cross and the light are followed by crowds of the faithful who with the priests are praying and singing. Such a solemn procession is a visible sign of the Church of God on earth, and a touching proof that all who follow the cross are the children of the one heavenly Father. Such a procession, then, typifies the Church Militant on earth; and everyone who takes part in it professes his membership in this Church.

The thought is inspiring. Think of the many thousands of processions that are taking place these days around the whole earth! What can be more sublime in Catholic life than this idea of common fellowship in Christ? When hundreds and thousands join in following the cross, when they unite to pray in common, when from all hearts the same cry goes forth—is it not clearly evident that one faith and one and the same hope possess all? When numerous crowds come together from all classes and states of life for a sacred purpose, for pious prayer, will not the Lord Himself be the living bond in their midst? He indeed promised it: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

ADMONITION

"*Oremus!* Let us pray!" How often our mother, Holy Church, bids us heed these words! Especially now, during the Rogation days, she is insistent in her admonition that we pray diligently. It seems as if once again she wanted to give all the trials and sorrows of her children over to the Savior about to ascend into heaven, so that He might present them in her name and theirs before the throne of the Father. Therefore at this time she leads her children out over fields and countryside, through streets and

lanes, and has them cry out again and again: "From lightning and tempest; from plague, famine and war; from all sin; from all evil—deliver us, O Lord!—That Thou wouldst vouchsafe to give and preserve the fruits of the earth; that Thou wouldst spare us; that Thou wouldst bring us to true penance; that Thou wouldst lift up our minds to heavenly desires; that Thou wouldst vouchsafe graciously to hear us—we beseech Thee, hear us!"

What can be more blessed than this united prayer at the Rogation processions? Here the just man prays with the sinner; here youth is united with old age; great and little, rich and poor, are here gathered together. Such a prayer has special efficacy, especially since it is said in common. "If you call upon the Lord at home by yourself alone," says St. Chrysostom, "you will not be heard as readily as when you are praying with your brethren; for here is more than you have at home: here is unanimity, co-operative prayer, the bond of holy love, the prayer of angelic innocence itself, for it is the prayer of the Church which is placed in the hands of the divine Son at the holy Sacrifice, so that it may ascend to the Lord."

XVI. FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

Holyday of obligation

Hardly another feast of the church year approaches in grandeur that of Christ's Ascension. In triumph our Lord is making His entry into heaven. His disciples gaze after Him with joy and longing. From this time on, the inner eye of all our Lord's disciples is directed heavenward in love and desire, until the Lord will appear again in His glory:

"Ye men of Galilee, why wonder you, looking up to heaven? Alleluia: as you have seen Him going up to heaven, so will He come again, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

(Introit of the Mass)

1. Historical Note. The feast of our Lord's Ascension was celebrated in very early times. Although Tertullian and Origen do not mention it in their register of feasts, the Church historian Socrates (380-440) designates it as a universal feast. We also have a long series of sermons written for this day by the Fathers of the Church.

The Ascension solemnity was observed spontaneously in all sections of the Church immediately after the cessation of the persecutions; for the close of our Redeemer's life upon earth could not possibly be overlooked in the liturgical arrangement of feasts. Besides, the place from which our Lord returned to the Father was soon held in high esteem. The Empress Helena had a beautiful basilica built on the Mount of Olives, which, sad to say, was destroyed by the Saracens and never rebuilt. Only an insignificant little church now marks the spot. This was pointed out as the place of the ascension as far back as the fourth century, and a footprint popularly credited with being that of our Lord is discernible there.

From the Mount of Olives, on which our Lord commenced His bitter Passion, He ascended into heaven. From this height a beautiful view of a large part of the Holy Land greets the eye. Towards the northeast lies the wooded plain of the Jordan, the waters of which Eliseus once parted with the mantle of Elias, and Jericho's fertile valley through which our Lord passed with His disciples. To the east, beyond the glittering waters of the Jordan, rises the blue mountain range of Galaad, protecting the Holy Land like a wall. Just opposite, in the hazy distance, the tip of Nebo pierces the sky, from which mountain Moses was permitted to behold the promised land. Towards the northeast curves the road to Samaria, and upon the distant mountain heights the city of Silo is seen, where Josue divided the Holy Land and served Samuel in the tabernacle. The mountains of Hebron are over to the south, in the valleys of which the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob erected their tents and herded their flocks. Somewhat nearer, leaning against a cozy hill, lies Bethlehem,

the birthplace of David and Jesus. In the far southeast, at a distance of about eight hours, appears that great mirror of water the Dead Sea, covering the spot on which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah lie buried. On the southern declivity of the Mount is Jerusalem with its hills and spires, at the western outskirts of which is Calvary with the Holy Sepulcher.

From this height our Savior once more looked out upon the most important sites of the land which He had sanctified with His footsteps and blessed with His blood. Then, from the midst of His disciples He rose up, soaring higher and higher, though still gazing eastward the while. Then, extending His hands, He gave the earth a farewell blessing.

2. Mystery of the Feast. The object of the feast is that tenet of our creed which states that Christ ascended into heaven, forty days after His resurrection, through His own power, with body and soul. In this connection we observe the following:

A. Christ ascended into heaven as *man*, i.e., with body and soul, for as God He had not left heaven. In His divinity He was in heaven as well as upon earth, where it was inseparably united with His humanity. Thus, His humanity, with which His divinity was united, ascended into heaven.

B. Christ ascended through His *own power*, and not like Elias, who rode to heaven in a fiery chariot as if in a storm; and not like Mary, the Mother of God, who was taken up to heaven. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven in virtue of the divine omnipotence abiding within Him.

C. Christ also took with Him to heaven the *souls of the just*, whom He had liberated from Limbo. How glorious a train and befitting a Victor over death and hell—our first parents; the heroes of the Old Testament; the venerable patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob); the great leader and lawgiver Moses, the multitudes of high priests, priests, and levites; the divinely inspired prophets; holy kings, penitents, women, virgins, and innocent children! “Ascending on high, he led captivity captive” (Ephesians 4, 8).

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D. Christ ascended into heaven to take *possession of His merited glory also as man*. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His glory?" (Luke 24, 26). St. Paul states the events in the life of the God-Man Jesus Christ in these words: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names" (Philippians 2, 6-9).

E. The Ascension is the *feast of our divine King's taking possession of His throne*, and is therefore a feast of joy for Christ our Head, but also for us who are the members of His body. For through His glorification human nature also was ennobled, and we were glorified. Our human nature participates in the highest divine honor. This idea is frequently emphasized by the Fathers of the Church and is beautifully treated in the Breviary readings throughout the octave. "We have received far greater things through Christ than we have lost through the devil's envy; not only have we been led back to Paradise, but we have also penetrated to heaven's high places—One of us, indeed our Head, is sitting upon the throne" (Pope Leo the Great). ". . . we have become partakers of His divinity" (Preface).

3. **Liturgy of the Feast.** A procession was the characteristic feature of the liturgy of the day till far into medieval times. Silvia Peregrina, the Gallic pilgrim, makes mention of a magnificent procession at Jerusalem. Elsewhere in the Orient, at Constantinople and at Antioch, for instance, it was also customary. During the Middle Ages such processions were quite common in Gaul and in Germany, and to this day in many places a great walk out into the country is held on this feast. The custom shows how greatly the principle of imitating our Lord as closely as possible influenced the introduction of liturgical acts. In our case the influencing circumstance was our

Lord's leading His disciples out of the city to the Mount of Olives. "And he led them out as far as Bethania: and lifting up his hands he blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up to heaven" (Luke 24, 50).

The Easter candle, which for forty days served as a symbol of our risen Lord, is extinguished after the Gospel. The resurrection statue too is removed from the altar, as a sign that Jesus has left this earth.

The Mass of the feast presents one of the rare instances in which the object of the solemnity is contained in the Epistle. In it St. Luke narrates the successive events of the ascension. The Gospel of the day is taken from St. Mark (16, 44ff.), in which our Lord's being taken up into heaven is briefly mentioned.

Since the fifteenth century the feast has had an octave, and for this reason the following Sunday is now called *Dominica infra Octavam*—the Sunday within the octave (Sixth Sunday after Easter). It serves to bridge over the feasts of the Ascension and of Pentecost. The Mass is best understood if we put ourselves in the mood of the small congregation of Christians gathered in Jerusalem after our Lord's departure. In addition to their longing for Jesus, they felt a certain sadness and homesickness. "My heart hath said to Thee, I have sought Thy face; Thy countenance, O Lord, I will seek" (Introit of the Mass). With this was combined the *awaiting of the Holy Ghost* (Gospel) and heartfelt appeal and prayer. The *Pentecost novena* recommended by the Church is thus fully in harmony with the liturgy.

The time between Ascension and Pentecost was ever held to be the preliminary celebration of the feast of *Pentecost* and was called *Hebdomada Expectationis*, i.e., the week of expectation. During the nine days between the Ascension and

Pentecost the apostles "were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1, 14), thus observing the first novena, or prayer of nine days. We, too, ought to bestir ourselves during this time of spiritual recollection and pray perseveringly for the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

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"In my Father's house are many mansions . . . and if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be" (John 14, 2, 3). When will our Lord come again? First at our death; and finally in glory on the great day on which He will judge all mankind. Then the second journey heavenward will take place, more brilliant by far than the first. This all of us will see; in this we are all to have our share.

Well, then, *Sursum corda*—let our hearts be directed heavenward! "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Colossians 3, 1 and 2). Carry out upon earth whatsoever your duty and your state of life demand of you; but in your daily cares do not forget heaven, your home, for which you have been created. "Our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory" (Philippians 3, 20 and 21).

XVII. FEAST OF PENTECOST

Pentecost, or Whitsunday, is nature's summer festival. But it is also the summer festival of the church year. Out of bud and blossom the ripening fruit comes forth: similarly the working of the Holy Ghost is intimately connected with that of the God-Man Jesus Christ. "The Holy Ghost is the most glorious fruit

of the life and of the suffering of Christ, and the royal gift of His Ascension. He sends the Holy Ghost to continue His work here below and to bring it to a glorious fruition.”¹⁸ Hence Pentecost cannot be severed from Easter; it is the brilliant completion and crowning of the Easter feast. For this reason, too, Pentecost for a long time had no octave: it was the solemn and majestic closing of the Easter season. In some respects this idea still prevails; but the octave is now included. The vestiges of Easter in the liturgy vanish only with the Mass of the Saturday after Pentecost and a rubric in the Breviary and Missal says: “*Post missam expirat tempus Paschale*—after the Mass the time of Easter ends.” Thus the Church considers Pentecost with its octave as still belonging to the Easter festal cycle.

1. **Vigil of Pentecost.** Like every other of our Lord’s great feasts, Pentecost has a preliminary solemnity or vigil. In the days of early Christianity the sacrament of Baptism was administered during the night before Pentecost, as during the night before Easter. Those who for some reason could not receive the sacrament on Holy Saturday, were baptized on the night before Pentecost. For this reason the blessing of baptismal water still takes place on the vigil. The divine service is similar to, but shorter than, the Easter-vigil solemnity. The prophecies are reduced to six; they are a selection from the prophecies of the Easter vigil.

The entire Mass is arranged with reference to the coming of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel speaks of the Holy Ghost, and the choir sings of the Holy Ghost in the Offertory and the Communion verses. All is longing and desire for the Paraclete with His gifts. The prayer of the Church beautifully expresses the thought of the day and the mood in which the day should be passed: “Grant, we beseech Thee, O almighty God, that the splendor of Thy brightness may shine forth upon us, and the light of Thy light may, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost,

confirm the hearts of those who have been regenerated by Thy grace.”

As an expression of joy the bells are rung at the *Gloria* as on Holy Saturday. Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Ghost, is at hand.

2. Pentecost Sunday. A. History of the Feast. The feast of Pentecost is an apostolic heritage of our church year. Its apostolic origin is expressly stated in a fragment attributed to St. Irenaeus. The Apostolic Constitutions affirm that Pentecost should be observed as a great feast, because on this day our Lord Jesus sent down the Holy Ghost. Sylvia, the Bordeaux pilgrim, informs us regarding a great and definitely arranged Pentecost festival of the year 385, with a night vigil and an early morning service in the church of St. Anastasia at Jerusalem. She related, moreover, that a solemn procession to Sion was held, where the passage of the Acts of the Apostles referring to the coming of the Holy Ghost was read; and that a solemnity took place upon the Mount of Olives and in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Vespers were said, and from which the people returned to the main church late in the evening with burning torches. For the Christian communities that beheld the living witnesses and the fruition of the great Foundation Day of the Church with its wonderful spiritual gifts, the annual observance of the descent of the Holy Ghost was a matter of course.

In the mother church of Rome, ever since olden times, the basilica of St. Peter has been the sacred station for the celebration of today's Mass. St. Peter indeed assumed a commanding position on the first Pentecost feast of the Church. The feast is also the solemn commemoration of the founding of the entire Church, and St. Peter, through Christ, is the rock upon which she firmly rests.

B. Meaning of the Feast. Pentecost is the celebration of the great event in which the Holy Ghost came down in the form of fiery tongues upon the disciples that were gathered together at Jerusalem. It is at the same time the feast of the founding of the Catholic Church. Finally, it is the feast of the third divine Person, the Holy Ghost, whose active and effective mission in the Church and in the souls of men should again be brought to our minds.

(a) *The Descent of the Holy Ghost.* On this day the Holy Ghost, whom the Church in her divine Office greets as the "new Creator," came down from heaven in a wind-storm in the form of fiery tongues.

The event is eminently instructive. The wind-storm symbolizes His might, the fire His essence, and the tongues the gift of languages bestowed by Him.

The Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles on the tenth day after our Lord's ascension, and on the fiftieth day after His resurrection from the dead. It was the "third hour" (Acts 2, 15), therefore, about midway between morning and noon, i.e., about nine o'clock. At the third hour, at Terce, we daily pray in the hymn:

Come, Holy Spirit, Paraclete,
One with the Father and the Son,
This hour make our hearts replete
With timely grace so dearly won.

Our lips and tongue, the faculty
Of mind, the senses Thee confess.
Inflame our hearts with charity,
Till others too may Thee profess.

(b) *The Birthday of the Catholic Church.* Our divine Savior planned, built, and organized the Church. The ship (to use a favorite figure of the Church) still rode at anchor at the world's strand. Not a wheel moved, not a sail stirred. Then suddenly Pentecost came upon it. In a roaring wind-storm the Holy

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Ghost descended upon it. Now behold the swelling sails and how everything quivers with life and movement! Heavenly fire-signals announce the departure. Christ's vicar, St. Peter, holds fast to the steering-wheel. Upon His pentecostal word the first thousands come aboard—representatives from all lands, as the Acts of the Apostles attests. Happy journey to you, holy Church of our Lord! . . . And to this day, the twentieth century, the great ship floats on the world's sea despite most terrible storms. Truly the wonder of the world, this Church which for almost two thousand years has successfully withstood storm upon storm!

(c) *The Feast of the Holy Ghost.* The Breviary prayers and the varying parts of today's Holy Mass are replete with praise of the Holy Ghost; and the splendid Pentecost Sequence, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, directs to Him all of its petitions:

Holy Spirit, come and shine
On our souls with beams divine,
Issuing from Thy radiance bright.

(Translation of Rev. P. Aylward, O. P.)

The feast thus contains exalted mysteries within itself. This becomes even more evident when we compare it with the pentecostal feast of the Old Testament. The latter, too, was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Easter, and was a commemoration of the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai, of the birthday of the Jewish religion, and a feast of thanksgiving for the garnered harvest. Accordingly, Pentecost is the Feast of *Promulgating the Law*. On this day the first law, the law of fear, written by the finger of God upon stone tablets, was made known on Mount Sinai. On the Christian Pentecost the second law, the law of love, given with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, was written with fiery characters in the hearts of men. The old Pentecost was the birthday of the *Jewish religion*; the Christian Pentecost is the *birthday of the Church*, of which the first fruits, three thousand in number, were baptized on this day. Pentecost, in the Old

Testament, was the *harvest-feast*. With this day the time of harvest begins also in the New Testament, for the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost are imparted so that the spiritual fruits of justification may ripen into maturity.

The *time of the year* in which Pentecost falls aptly coincides with its meaning: Nature's fullness of beauty and splendor, unfolded about the time of Pentecost, is a symbol of the efficacious graces of the Holy Ghost.

3. The Octave. In olden times Pentecost was a three-day celebration. Upon this followed the Ember days. Thus the octave of Pentecost imitated that of Easter. The Holy Ghost and Baptism are the ever recurrent themes of the entire octave of Pentecost.

The octave is so privileged that in it no other feast may be celebrated. The first three days, like those of the octave of Easter, are feasts of the first class. In some places Monday is a holyday of obligation. Every day is a station day and has its own Mass. St. Peter's basilica and those of the apostles are the station churches.

The Ember fast days of the week are unique. As already mentioned, they are older than the octave; hence they were retained as fast days. But by way of exception, red is the liturgical color of these days as on the feast itself. Then there are other features of the joyous Easter time occurring on them, for instance, the undiminished *Alleluia*.

These Ember fast days should admonish us that there is no time in which we have no need of penance. There is indeed no time in which men do not sin. And since priests may die at any time, we ought to pray repeatedly for more priests and for good ones. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9, 38).

On Pentecost Saturday three Lessons from Moses in the Mass refer to the harvest and the offering of first fruits in the temple.

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Formerly, these summer Ember days ended the time during which the so-called tithe (the Church-tax) had to be paid to the Church. And thus the liturgy very delicately reminds us that if we would be true Christians, we must unite the offerings of money and valuables, which we bring to church, with the Sacrifice of the altar.

ADMONITION

During the entire week the Church reminds us of the benefactions of the Holy Ghost, and of His seven gifts. Again and again her prayer is directed to heaven: "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus!*"—Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love." Far too little is the Holy Ghost thought of, loved, and honored. During the octave of this feast the Church, on her part at least, wishes to overcome the negligence of Christians.

Do not allow Pentecost to pass by without thanking the Holy Ghost for the sacrament of Confirmation; for in it He came down to you in a very special manner. What the first Pentecost was for the apostles, holy Confirmation was for you—then you received the fullness of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul wrote to his pupil Timothy: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands" (2 Timothy 1, 6). That holds good for the grace of Confirmation as well. We ought to "stir up" this grace often, i.e., we should often recall the day of our Confirmation with gratitude and with the renewal of the promise: "I will live and die as a good Catholic Christian." This should be done especially on the principal feast of the Holy Ghost, on Pentecost.

"Extinguish not the spirit," St. Paul cries out (1 Thessalonians 5, 19). He is aware of the power of the Holy Ghost, for it abided in him. We are precious before God in proportion to the measure in which we allow ourselves to be ruled by the Holy Ghost. "It is the Spirit that giveth life." The time in

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which the descent of the Spirit took place is one in which the Christian world ought to pray with redoubled zeal and fidelity for the Holy Ghost and His graces:

Thou on those who evermore
Thee confess and thee adore
In thy sevenfold gifts descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward,
Give them thy salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end.

Amen. Alleluia.

*(Translation from Dom Cabrol's
"Liturgical Prayerbook")*



(For explanation of design see page 185)

PART THREE

THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

With the feast of Pentecost and its octave the Easter season ends. The part of the church year which now follows is called the *Season after Pentecost*. During this season the reign of grace, established at Easter and completed at Pentecost, ought to take deeper root in the souls of men and be preserved in everyday life.

1. **The Sundays after Pentecost**, taken by themselves and in relation to the entire church year, are much more loosely connected than those of the other holy seasons. Consecutive historical matter is missing during this part of the church year. Moreover, the historical and systematic grouping which at present prevails had a later origin than the other portions of the church year. In fact, the common Sundays had no distinct liturgical position until after the sixth century. Before this time there was only a sort of *Commune Dominicarum*, a general choice of Sunday Masses. In the *Gregorian Sacramentary*, about the end of the eighth century, we can see that the church year had already assumed its present form. But the Sundays after Pentecost were enumerated according to various viewpoints even in the Middle Ages. Thus, for instance, a book of homilies of Charlemagne enumerates three Sundays after Pentecost, seven after the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, five after that of St. Lawrence, the Ember week of September, six Sundays after Michaelmas.

The ordinary Sundays after Pentecost have their present Breviary and Mass order since the time of Pope Pius V. With

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the exception of the last Sunday, their liturgical prayers and readings are of a more general nature. The Gospels develop Christ's manifestation to the world through His miracles and teachings; the Epistles afford individual directions for the interior life from the letters of the apostles; the song portions often contain urgent petitions for divine assistance. Of outstanding beauty are the Collects, or Prayers. In them can be well seen how the Church has mastered the art of saying a great deal in very few words. Many a Collect contains rich materials for meditations and sermons.

Depending upon the day on which Easter happens to fall, the number of the Sundays after Pentecost may be as many as twenty-eight, or as few as twenty-three. The extent of time is about half a year and thus corresponds with nature's summer and fall. Accordingly, the time is divided into two parts, which, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth Sunday (during which the autumn Ember days usually occur) almost imperceptibly merge one into the other. Until then there is little variation of time. As in nature so in the church year, summer is a time of quiet exuberant growth, and arduous, perspiring, but also joyous and blessed labor. We rejoice in our holy calling, draw from the life-springs of the Church, and ever seek to make her spirit our own. Then, in the second part, in harmony with autumn's increasing darkness, the two following motives become apparent: the sorrows of this life and the longing for Christ's return. They become more and more pronounced, until liberation and the plenitude of Redemption are finally announced.

We, the children of a modern age, trained in the logic of the schools, look for a definite trend of thought, for system and unity in this series of Sundays. Hence efforts have been repeatedly made to weave a continuity of thought into these Sundays. But that is not the way of the ancient Church, nor is it the way in which God carries on His work.

"Besides the logic of the schools, there is also a *logic* of nature and a logic of grace, and in accordance with these two kinds of logic especially, the Creator of all things and the Holy Ghost work. Look out upon the expanse of field and

meadow in springtime. What a variety and richness on this gigantic carpet! Does it present a chaotic picture, or rather one of a wondrously beautiful and ever-changing harmony, whose witchery the artful setting of a florist cannot approach even remotely? Do you think that this expanse is but a disorderly jumbled confusion? If it were, it would not be so beautiful to behold. You may rest assured, not a single blade of grass in this entire plan has come up unlawfully. That is the logic of nature, the logic of the Creator! And in that which is above nature, in the realm of grace, an entirely different logic from that of our schools prevails. 'The Spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh, and whither he goeth.' The effectiveness of grace is not regulated according to your opinions and reckonings." ¹⁹

Just so are the Sundays after Pentecost. Even if they are lacking a centralized theme—the readings (Epistle and Gospel) rarely stand in any relationship to each other—in their totality they are, nevertheless, replete with esthetic beauty. "It is just in their modest and unassuming raiment that they conceal an unusual wealth of beauty and life, of spirit and feeling. To him who knows how to penetrate within them, they afford a profound glimpse into the loving, longing soul of the Church, and increasingly makes this soul a part of himself." ⁹

2. The Feast Days after Pentecost. A number of feasts have, as it were, been built into the season after Pentecost. They do not belong directly to the structure and to the historical development of the work of Christ's Redemption, but rather glorify the truths and graces which are of greatest influence for the soul-life of Christians. Such are:

The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

The Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, or Corpus Christi.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart.

The Feast of the Most Precious Blood.

The two feasts in honor of the Holy Cross.

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The Feast of Our Lord's Transfiguration.

The Feast of the Kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Feast of the Dedication of a Church.

I. FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

The work of the Redemption, which up to this time was kept ever before our minds, is fundamentally a work common to all three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. This truth is clearly expressed in the second last prayer before Holy Communion at every Mass: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who by the Father's will, with the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast given life to the world through Thy own death. . . ." Now that the work of Redemption has been solemnly commemorated, holy Church properly devotes a solemn feast to the primal source of the Redemption, and in it pays special honor to the Most Holy Trinity.

"There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one" (1 John 5, 7). "The royal mystery of God radiates on high and down from heaven onto the earth, and in majestic glory and repose it floods with its light both this world and the world beyond. Here on earth it is recognizable through the veil of faith; there beyond it is evident in its glory to the eye of immediate contemplation. It is proper that we searchingly and respectfully look up to this central sun of all mysteries and celebrate a feast day in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of which is well symbolized by the repose, majesty, and fruitfulness of the summertime that is now at hand."¹⁸

1. **History of the Feast.** The feast of the Blessed Trinity had its beginning in the tenth century, when Bishop Stephan of Liège (d. 920) introduced it into his church for the first time. Gradually it was accepted in the churches of the Netherlands, England, Germany, and France. The popes, however, despite repeated petitionings, hesitated for a long time to institute the

feast for the entire Church: "Since the Holy Trinity is celebrated every Sunday, nay, every day" (Pope Alexander II). Pope John XXII, in 1334, was the first to order the general observance of the feast on the first Sunday after Pentecost. The much older Breviary Office had been already revised by the Franciscan John Peckham (1292). The special Preface, ascribed to Pope Pelagius I (555-560), was originally a formula of profession of faith in this mystery. Pope Clement XIII issued the decree that this Preface is to be used on all Sundays on which no other is prescribed because of any special solemnity. The Office, as we have it today, dates from the time of Pope Pius V, and is "one of the most beautiful of the Breviary, distinguished at once by its exalted ideas, depth of conception, and perspicuity of form."²⁰ The systematic construction of the Matins for this feast should be noted.

2. Liturgical Character of the Feast. Although this feast, like those following, no longer belongs to the development of the church year, it can be interpreted as the combination of the three principal feasts of the Church which we are wont to attribute to the different divine Persons—Christmas to the Father, Easter to the Son, Pentecost to the Holy Ghost.

Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost form the brilliant triple constellation in the ecclesiastical festal cycle. Christmas is our heavenly Father's feast of love, for He sends His only-begotten Son into the world: "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son" (John 3, 16). Easter is the feast of love of the divine Son, who through His suffering and resurrection redeemed the world: "In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us" (1 John 3, 16). Pentecost is the love-feast of the Holy Ghost, who through His coming down to us pours out the fiery stream of heavenly love into the hearts of the faithful: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2, 4). On the feast of the Blessed Trinity the Church combines these three works of the love and grace of the triune God, of the Father, of the

Son, and of the Holy Ghost, into a mighty prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Regarding the purpose of this feast, St. Vincent Ferrer wrote: "As hitherto feasts for the three divine Persons were celebrated separately, according to the fitness of the time, so on this day the solemnity of all three Persons together, under the title of Blessed Trinity, should be observed with full and universal joy. As the Church each year celebrates the feast of All Saints to make amends for the negligences possibly perpetrated on the individual feasts of the saints, so today she celebrates the principal feast of the Most Holy Trinity in atonement for the negligences perhaps committed on the separate feasts of the triune God."

"After the great work of the Redemption has been accomplished, completed by the Holy Ghost, and guaranteed to souls in the Church till the end of time, we now look up to the Most Holy Trinity as the prime mover and accomplisher of the entire great work."¹⁶

3. Mystery of the Feast. One God in three Persons—that is, in short, the content of the mystery of the feast. Through our faith we profess that our Lord is one in His divine nature and threefold in person. Hence, three things are to be remembered regarding this mystery.

A. *The first is the oneness of nature.* Nature, or essence, is that which makes something to be what it is, through which it differs from all other things, and without which it can neither exist nor be thought of. The divine nature is one, because it is eternal and because another eternal being and another God cannot exist. For this reason the three divine Persons are but one God, since they have one and the same nature, or being. "There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one" (1 John 5, 7).

B. *The second is that there are three Persons.* God is an actual, living, independent Being existing in Himself. Therefore He must be a personal Being. He is a personal God, not an

indefinite, scattered Being, say for instance a world-soul without spirit and power, without might and consciousness. Then God would be less than we are. Our faith, however, tells us: In God there is not, as with us, only one person. In Him there are three Persons; i.e., in God there are three glorious possessors, occupants, and bearers of the divine nature—three who together and inseparably have the plenitude of divine nature, the vast expanse of divine being and divine blessedness. Our Lord Himself spoke wonderfully regarding these three. And their most sacred names He revealed to us: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

C. *The third point to be noted refers to the nature and manner of the origin*, by which the three Persons are in possession of the divine nature and are distinguished one from another. As the Father knows Himself He begets His co-essential Son, who is therefore also called Wisdom, the Word, and the Image of the Father. Through the mutual love of the Father and the Son the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, and hence is called the "Spirit of Love." The Father is called the First Person because He has His origin in no other. The Son is called the Second Person because He is begotten of the Father from all eternity. The Holy Ghost is called the Third Person, because from all eternity He proceeds from the Father and the Son together.

All this we can never entirely understand. Our weak reason understands even created things only in an imperfect manner. Consequently it is impossible for it to comprehend a mystery which is immeasurably exalted above all created things. (Recall St. Augustine and the child that wanted to dip out the ocean into a little sand hole.) "O most mighty, great, and powerful, the Lord of Hosts is Thy name. Great in counsel and incomprehensible in thought" (Jeremias 32, 18-19). "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God" (Epistle)!

Incomprehensible as the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is,

it nevertheless is by no means contrary to reason. For we do not say that God in His nature is at once simple and threefold; but that He is, although simple in nature, threefold in person.

To bring this mystery within our grasp as far as possible, the Fathers of the Church make use of various comparisons. The most seemly one is that of our own soul, in which we distinguish its being, its knowing, and its willing, although it is only one in essence. Regarding the sun we distinguish the mass itself, its light, and its warmth. The sun exists in itself, the rays of light proceed from the sun, and warmth proceeds at once from the light rays and from the sun.

ADMONITION

The doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity is the foundation stone of Christianity. All other matters of faith are built up on this doctrine and rest upon it. He who denies it, disowns all Christianity. In the name of the Most Holy Trinity all sacraments are administered and all blessings are given. Holy Mass, the sermon, and all prayers of the Church begin and end by calling upon the divine Persons.

The sign of the cross is an invocation of the Blessed Trinity. With it we begin the day in the morning hours and end it at night. With it we enter upon and conclude the day's toil, go into and out of church, sit down at table and say our grace after meals.

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity we are made members of the Church in Baptism. In the same name we pass out of this world when the priest pronounces the last blessing over us on our deathbed: "Go forth, O Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee. . . . We commend to thee, O Lord, the soul of thy servant. . . . For although he hath sinned, he hath not denied the

Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And even after death, when the priest stands before the bier, he calls upon the Blessed Trinity for a merciful judgment upon the departed soul: "Enter not into judgment, O Lord, with thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man be justified, unless the remission of all his sins is granted to him by Thee. Let not, then, we beseech Thee, the sentence of Thy judgment fall heavily upon him whom the true prayer of Christian faith commends to Thee; but by the assistance of Thy grace may he be worthy to escape the judgment of Thy vengeance, who whilst he lived was signed with the sign of the Holy Trinity: Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen."

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, then, is the epitome, the beginning, the middle, and the end of our life. "For what have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (Psalm 72, 25f.).

What follows from this? That we should honor, love, and treasure the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. We pray often: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, etc." It is an old and venerable prayer. How often have we said these sacred words without further thought! How often were they not a mere prayer of the lips! Pray these words repeatedly at Mass today, on the feast of the Blessed Trinity, slowly and devoutly, while directing your highest, most profound, and most humble thoughts to the holy triune God. Do this now and you will also pause a little at other times when you say this exalted prayer.

And when you leave the church take holy water, again bless yourself devoutly with the sign of the holy cross, and place your mind and heart, your life and your calling under the powerful protection of God, while you receive the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

“Blessed be the holy Trinity and undivided Unity!

“We shall give glory to Him because He hath shown us His mercy!”
(*Introit of the feast*)

II. FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

The Church celebrates the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday; but then the solemnity is rather quiet and somewhat sad. For on that day our Lord commenced His sufferings in the Garden of Olives; and Good Friday, on which He shed his last heart's blood, was already in the offing. But after our Savior has suffered death upon the cross, and the soul's springtime has come with His glorious resurrection; after the Holy Ghost has come down to us as the beneficent fruit of the Redemption—the Church is again mindful of the great treasure she received from the hand of the divine Savior at the Last Supper. Now she shows Him to us—her pensive *Vexilla Regis* now gives way to the triumphant *Lauda Sion*, and the quiet festivity of Holy Thursday passes over into the jubilant solemnity of *Corpus Christi*.

1. **History of the Feast.** “I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones” (Matthew 11, 25). Our Lord's word may also be applied to the origin of the feast of Corpus Christi. Divine Providence made use of a poor and humble nun for the institution of this feast. This nun, Juliana by name, was born in 1193 in a village near Liège. After the death of her devout parents, when she was but five years of age, she was brought to the institute of the Augustinian Nuns of Mont-Cornillon, not far from Liège, and later became a member of the community. Here she remained the greater part of her life, and in 1230 was elected prioress of the convent.

One of the principal objects of her meditations, from childhood on, was the Holy Eucharist. It seemed to her that this most holy mystery was not accorded the honor it deserved. What she desired particularly, in the series of ecclesiastical feasts, was one that should be especially devoted to this exalted mystery. In a vision which came to her repeatedly she beheld the Church under the symbol of a full moon having a rift or gap. This seemed to her to signify the still missing feast of the Holy Eucharist. Only in 1230, after she had become superioress of her convent, did she venture to make known, to several devout and learned men, what had engaged her heart for twenty years. Among these was the archdeacon James Pantaleon of Liége, who later became Pope Urban IV. These men were in perfect agreement with Juliana; and with their approval Bishop Robert of Liége, in 1246, ordered that the feast of the Blessed Sacrament be observed in his diocese every year on the Thursday after the feast of the Blessed Trinity; moreover, that it was to rank in solemnity with the feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. When James Pantaleon ascended the papal throne in 1261 as Urban IV, the bishop of Liége wrote to him in behalf of the feast. Urban IV was compliant, and in the year before his death issued the decree *Transiturus*, in which he instituted the feast for all Christendom. Henceforth it was to be celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. In accordance with the commission of Urban IV, St. Thomas of Aquin composed the magnificent Office which so beautifully expresses the doctrinal content of the feast, and which is considered a classic in the art of prayer. But Urban IV died before the decree was promulgated. The affair then came to a halt. Meanwhile the feast was gradually introduced into individual dioceses. Pope Clement V took up the idea of Urban IV, and the Council of Vienna, in 1311, ordered the feast to be observed by all Christians. The procession was at first held only in some dioceses, but became general in the time of Pope John XXII.

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Humble Juliana, whom we have to thank for giving the first impetus to the introduction of this glorious feast, was driven by adverse circumstances from convent to convent, from cloister to cloister, until she died as the weak instrument of Divine Providence on April 5, 1258, in the cloister at Fosses. She was buried in the Convent of Villier in the diocese of Namur.

2. Liturgical Celebration of the Feast. The Church observes this feast with the highest pomp the liturgy has at its disposal. It is a feast of the first class, with solemn divine service, and procession with the Blessed Sacrament. At the doors and elsewhere birch and beechwood saplings, in their new verdure, are often set up. The high altar is beautifully ornamented. In the middle stands the monstrance as on a golden throne. From its glistening rays the sacred Host gleams forth. Numerous lights flare up towards it as if they were saying in holy adoration: "Praise and thanksgiving without end, to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

The feast of Corpus Christi is the Christian feast of tabernacles. Like the Jewish feast of tabernacles, ours is one of generous thanksgiving for God's dwelling and journeying with His people through the great desert, for sending Manna and the streams of wonderful water, and for His manifold protection. And this is far truer and much more real with us than it ever was with the Israelites.

The Mass of the feast, which is said throughout the octave with the exception of Sunday, contains the magnificent Sequence *Lauda Sion*: "Sion, lift thy voice and sing, praise thy Savior, praise thy King; praise with hymns thy Shepherd true." This sequence is one of the most beautiful creations of the philosopher-poet St. Thomas of Aquin (d. 1274). It is a clear and profound exposition of the whole of the Church's doctrine regarding the Holy Eucharist.

The solemn *procession with the Blessed Sacrament* is peculiar

to this feast. The stations at the four altars and the singing of the beginnings of the four Gospels are *usus germanicus*, a German custom, which is secure in its full right and venerable in its antiquity (since the fourteenth century), and through Rome's approbation since 1820 (S.R.C. of September 13).

"In the holy joy over the possession of this great Treasure, in the ardent longing to have homage paid to Him by all the world, and in the heartfelt wish to impart to the world the blessing of His presence and the grace-bestowing shadow of His Passion—the Church cannot remain in one place on this day. Nor can she limit her grateful adoration and love to the confines of her consecrated walls; she must go out of doors, out upon city streets and country lanes. She erects triumphal arches and canopies to her Spouse and all the world approaches to pay Him homage. As at our Lord's glorious entry into Jerusalem, so on this day the Church lays hold of all of nature's realms—the gold and silver of the earth; the things man has ingeniously wrought; the wealth of *ideas* expressed in the fine arts; and all the strength of love and joy the human heart can give. There are the flowers, the sunny offspring of field and garden; the leafy garlands from the woods; incense from far Arabia; the witchery of light and the exquisite strains from the world of melody; even the martial array of earthly cohorts—all must do homage to the Savior on this day. It is, as it were, a summons to all creation."¹⁸

ADMONITION

"*Nova sint omnia, corda, voces et opera!* Let all things be new: the heart, the tongue, the deeds!" During these days we should renew our fervor by venerating the Blessed Sacrament in the various appropriate exercises, at holy Mass, in the reception of Holy Communion, and in our visits and devotions. At the approach of the feast of Corpus Christi the old and faded decorations of the Blessed Sacrament altar are restored and made to look like new. We ought to do likewise with our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. *Recedant vetera!* Away with the

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old humdrum routine! *Nova sint omnia*: Let all things be renewed! Whenever possible, let us take part in the Corpus Christi procession. It belongs to the feast.

1. *It is a public profession of faith* in this most holy Sacrament. As the flower turns towards the light of the Sun, so our heart is drawn to the sun of grace in the Sacrament; and therefore we profess our faith openly and gladly. Sad to say, there are Catholics who are ashamed of their faith. To such our divine Savior has spoken a serious word: "He that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when he shall come in his majesty" (Luke 9, 26).

2. *It is a solemn public devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and a reparation for dishonors* committed by those who do not believe in the Sacrament, by those who receive it unworthily, or by those who use the sacred word in cursing or blaspheming. In reparation for all such sins we shall honor and adore Jesus openly and with due solemnity.

3. *It is a solemn thanksgiving* for the love which prompted Jesus Christ to institute this Sacrament, and for the benefits which He continually bestows upon us especially through the sacrifice of the Mass and through Holy Communion.

Adoremus in aeternum sanctissimum Sacramentum!

Let us adore forever the most Holy Sacrament!

III. FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

Immediately after the feast of Corpus Christi with its octave, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated. Besides being close to Corpus Christi in point of time, the feast of the Sacred Heart is related to it also in other respects. In the first place it is in its very nature a glorification of the Person and of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Also in its origin it has many a resemblance to the feast of Corpus Christi.

1. **History of the Feast.** The Sacred Heart of Jesus was adored and venerated throughout the centuries. But such vener-

ation was chiefly the private devotion of individual souls. Our Lord had revealed His Most Sacred Heart especially to the holy Benedictine nuns Gertrude and Mechtilde, in the thirteenth century. The introduction of the feast into the Church and its general spread was occasioned by the revelations granted to one of the spiritual daughters of St. Francis of Sales, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Just as our Lord passed by the great doctors and renowned saints of the Church to effect the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi, so He chose the humble nun of Paray-le-Monial to promote the veneration of His Most Sacred Heart. The spread of the cult and of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Church became her life-work. The most celebrated appearance of our Savior to the saintly nun took place on June 16, 1675. Our Lord appeared to her during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, showed her His love-inflamed Heart, and said to her: "Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even unto exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love. In return I receive from the greater part of men only ingratitude, through their irreverence and sacrilege and the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this Sacrament of Love. It is for this reason I ask thee that the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament be made a special feast for honoring My Heart by receiving Communion on that day and making reparation for the indignities it has received."

The Church hesitated to give her approval to the devotion until the private revelations to Margaret Mary Alacoque were carefully investigated; but particularly until an exhaustive inquiry into the dogmatic aspects of the object and manner of the new devotion to the Sacred Heart had been made. Conformable to the hierarchical organization of the Church, which orders and regulates worship and liturgy in the name of Christ and the Holy Ghost, new devotions, even when they prove to be espe-

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cially appropriate at a particular time, require the examination and approbation of this selfsame Church.

Pope Clement XIII granted that the devotion and the feast be held in certain countries and dioceses (1765). Pope Pius IX, in 1865, ordered the feast to be observed in the universal Church, and Pope Leo XIII raised it to a feast of the first class. Finally His Holiness Pope Pius XI endowed it with a privileged octave of the third order and gave it a new Mass text and Breviary Office.

2. Object of the Feast. The object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as well as of the feast itself, is the corporal, human-divine Heart of Jesus, which beat and even now beats in the breast of our Redeemer, in union with His divinity, which since the Incarnation is not severed from the Person of Christ; and especially the supersensible Heart of Christ, by which is meant the divine and human will of Christ, the entire interior life of the will and the emotions of our Lord. "Thus, the devotion to the Sacred Heart does not at all exclude worship of the physically real Heart of Jesus; it rather addresses itself to the latter; but it ever ascends to the supernatural Heart, to the divine and human will and emotional life of our Lord, especially to His love, and there it remains in love, adoring, wondering, sorrowing for sin, atoning and conforming." ¹⁶ This is the complete object of the devotion—heart and love. The heart is the physically perceptible part, love is the spiritual and more distinguished part; both together, however, form one object, i.e., the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the symbol, seat, and throne of love, or, in a word, the Heart of Jesus burning with love.

"God is love (1 John 4, 16). He is love more than anything else. Not alone did He love us from all eternity with His divine uncreated love, and mercifully draw us to Himself (Jeremias 31, 3); but He also wanted to love us with a human heart. Therefore He took to Himself a human heart, and loved us as only the children of men can love. Indeed He

loved us more than any human being can love—faithfully, sincerely, forgetting Himself, ever exerting Himself for our welfare, delivering Himself unto death (Galatians 2, 20); and then He made us the heirs of all His conquests and possessions for time and for eternity.

Two great deeds of the divine Heart of Jesus are especially prominent in the feast of the Sacred Heart, in fact in every Sacred Heart devotion: on the one hand, the unbounded love which prompted our Lord to give His own life for us on the cross; on the other, that infinitely tender love which prompted Him to give Himself to us as our spiritual food. Accordingly, we worship the divine Heart of Jesus:

(1) *As the wounded and pierced Heart*, which sacrificed itself for us in death; and we place before our eyes, as we behold that transfigured Heart, all those loving mercies which the Redeemer in His suffering and death upon Golgotha bestowed upon us.—We honor and adore:

(2) *The Heart of Jesus burning with love in the Blessed Sacrament*—the Heart filled with love for every soul, which offers a refuge to all who are in need of protection.

3. Liturgy of the Feast. Love, suffering, and the body of Jesus form the principal ideas of the feast in Mass and in Breviary. The new Mass of the feast includes a glorification of that love of Christ which sacrificed itself for us through suffering, and which is ever calling to us and offering protection. All our confidence is in Christ, St. Paul tells us in the Epistle, in Christ who must dwell in our hearts through faith and charity. The Gospel explains the source of the fountains of grace: “a soldier opened the side with a lance and immediately blood and water came forth.” The Preface speaks of this piercing of the sacred side: “that the opened heart, a treasury of divine bounty, may pour forth upon us floods of compassion and grace.” May this heart, “which never ceases to burn with love for us, be a haven of rest to the pious and a salutary refuge for sinners.”

The purpose of the feast of the Sacred Heart is to make us realize our Lord's love more and more, and to offer satisfac-

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tion to our Redeemer for the outrages committed against Him especially in the Sacrament of Love. Hence atonement services with a solemn consecration to the Sacred Heart take place on this day.

ADMONITION

“Behold this Heart which has so greatly loved men!” Thus spoke our divine Savior to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Similarly does holy Church speak to us, her children, in pointing to the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The picture of the Sacred Heart, which should be in every home, serves to remind us continually of our Savior’s unbounded love, and to move us to offer Him praise, gratitude, and profound admiration. Especially, however, should it remind us to return this love in all sincerity and to give Jesus our heart without reserve. For just in this the devout veneration of His divine Heart consists, that we direct all our thoughts, desires, and actions in accordance with the will and satisfaction of His heart, and at all times imitate its virtues.

“Behold this Heart which has so greatly loved men!” *Hoc probat eius passio, hoc sanguinis, effusio, per quam nobis redemptio datur et Dei visio*—“His sacred Passion and the shedding of His blood proves it, for by them He obtained for us our redemption and the vision of God” (St. Bernard).

Se nascens dedit socium,
Convalescens in edulium,
Se moriens in pretium,
Se regnans dat in praeium.

(St. Thomas Aquinas)

By birth, our fellow-man was He;
Our meat, while sitting at the board;
He died, our ransom to be;
He ever reigns, our great reward.

(Translation of Rev. John M. Neale)

Do we want more proofs of His boundless love for us? See how this Heart loves! And surely we shall not deny Him our love in return!

IV. FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

(August 6)

On August 6 the Church commemorates the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. Something of the liturgical veneration of this mystery dates back to the seventh century. St. Ildephonse of Toledo informs us that on this day three Masses were celebrated. In a Sacramentary of Tours (ninth century) the feast even had a vigil. It was through Pope Calixtus III (1455-1458), in 1457, however, that the feast was spread throughout the Church, in thanksgiving for the victory over the Turks at Belgrade. Since the Greeks observe the same feast on the sixth of August, this day was chosen for its celebration.

The feast reminds us of the wonderful event in the life of Jesus, in which He became transfigured before the eyes of His apostles. It happened in the second half of His active life on earth, shortly after He had foretold His sufferings to His disciples. (Compare the Gospel of Quinquagesima Sunday.) One evening our Lord went up Mount Thabor with His beloved apostles, Peter, James, and John. Night was approaching. Jesus was praying, and meanwhile the apostles, tired of the day's labors, fell asleep. Then, through that outward form of His human nature, the glory of His divinity shone forth—He became transfigured. The disciples were awakened by the blinding intensity of the light, and are our witnesses of the well-known scene.

What does the feast say to us?

(1) With believing reverence and adoration we should look upon Christ, the eternal God and King: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him!" The transfiguration of Christ is a festival of the King.

(2) We ought to see our own transfiguration in that of Christ.

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“We look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory” (Philippians 3, 20 and 21).

(3) We are to work at our transfiguration during our whole life—becoming more and more spiritual, looking after our interior life, and severing ourselves from what is earthly.

(4) We have a sacrament of transfiguration—the Holy Eucharist. Our transfigured Lord comes amongst us at Mass, and in Holy Communion we receive the “seed of transfiguration” and the pledge of our own resurrection.

Christian art, that fair daughter of heaven, has sought to depict the great event of Christ’s transfiguration in various ways. Raphael’s painting especially has become renowned. Genius has reached its highest point in this picture, which is considered the most beautiful painting in the world. This masterpiece presents two scenes: exalted bliss upon the mountain, profound woe in the valley below. In the upper scene our Redeemer appears hovering between heaven and earth, surrounded by Moses and Elias, who look up to Him in adoration. A heavenly light, undulating like a living flame, flows from the figure of our Lord. About His head the light scintillates in divine glory and shines over His garments, now almost blinding in their whiteness. With His arms uplifted, and looking up to the Father in heaven, the Redeemer seems to say: “Father, glorify Me with that brightness which I had with You before the world was made.” Mortal man, however, cannot bear to behold this brightness. We know this from the three disciples who were present on the mountain. James is lying prone upon the ground; Peter is turning away from the manifestation of glory and cannot open his eyes; John is holding his right hand to shield his blinded eyes.

At the foot of the mountain an unhappy family is seen bringing an obsessed boy to be healed. The boy is foaming at the mouth and raving so terribly that his father can hardly hold him. An elder sister is kneeling in the foreground and is sorrowfully pointing to her unfortunate brother. A younger sister is turning away, her eyes filled with tears, moving the beholder to profoundest sympathy.

MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

Raphael shows us, on Thabor's heights, our transfigured Lord, before whom "every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven"—Moses and Elias; "on earth"—the disciples whom Jesus loved; "and under the earth"—the evil spirits (Philippians 2, 10). Especially in the latter scene does the artist reveal the spiritual and truly artistic conception of the subject. He does not open the abyss of hell, nor does he show us, as Fiesole and Botticelli have done, the ugly shapes of demons who cringe and writhe in their fear and hatred before the glory of our Lord. Raphael depicts the power and helplessness of the unseen evil spirit in the boy much more impressively because more in accordance with theological and artistic truth.

"The Transfiguration of Christ" is Raphael's swan song. While he was putting the finishing touches to this masterpiece death came to take the brush from his hand. On Good Friday, April 6, 1520, the soul of the artist escaped to those lightsome heights which it had contemplated in the "Transfiguration" that at his death hung above his bed.

V. FEAST OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

(July 7)

Besides the feast of the Sacred Heart we also celebrate a special feast in honor of the precious blood of our Lord. The redeeming blood belongs to the express object of many other mysteries of our Lord's suffering, and really to the content of the entire divine and human activity in the Redeemer. Good Friday and the feast of Corpus Christi have already taken us to the well-springs of Christ's sacrificial blood, and the feast of the Sacred Heart has shown us the bleeding heart-wound of the Redeemer. The present feast is a completion and a repetition, with variations, of the mysteries of our Lord's suffering. To unlock to us the inexhaustible riches of our Redeemer's sacred blood still more, the Church has us celebrate a special feast, that of the Most Precious Blood. And rightly so, because the most precious blood of Christ is of such great significance that

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a special feast and an exclusive observance during the church year is surely in place.

The feast was introduced and appointed for the entire Church by Pope Pius IX in 1849. Before this time it was celebrated in but a few dioceses, chiefly during Lent. The Mass and the Breviary of the feast form an anthology of the most beautiful passages referring to the world's Redemption through our Lord's precious blood. Here, too, are contained the reasons—often in very impressive words and pictures—for which we ought to give so much honor to the Most Precious Blood. Three reasons are outstanding:

(1) There is, in the first place, the native dignity and sublimity of this sacred blood. It is the blood of the God-Man. His blood, like His soul and body, was intimately united with the Divinity and is therefore adorable. Hence the liturgy of the feast repeatedly points out that it is the blood of the Son of God. "*Sanguis Filii Dei emundat nos!*—may the blood of the Son of God cleanse us!" (Antiphon.)

(2) The second reason is the participation of this blood in the divine and human calling and mission of Jesus Christ. His blood, like ours, was the bearer and contributing source of His entire life; of His inner spiritual life as well as of His outward activity. Most effectively, however, was this blood applied at the great Sacrifice of the Redemption upon Golgotha. "*Redemisti nos Domine in sanguine tuo*—Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy blood" (Introit).

(3) The continual effectiveness and redemptive activity of this blood is the third reason. Not only did our Lord shed His blood in the distant past, reunite it with Himself in the Resurrection and take it along with Him to heaven; but this blood also is and remains ever near to us in His redeeming activity, especially at holy Mass and in the sacraments. Thus, His blood is for us "as a fountain of water springing forth unto eternal life" (Postcommunion).

“The veneration of the divine blood has found a place even in our literature through the lovely legend of the *Holy Grail*—that precious vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have preserved the blood of our Redeemer shed upon Calvary. According to poetic legend, this vessel became the heritage and the keepsake of a knightly people of royal rank, not only as their most venerable sacred relic, but also as a pledge of immortality and of temporal welfare, through the effect of its mysterious blessing. This beautiful legend is but a thoughtful parable of the Church, of her most sacred blood-treasure, the Blessed Sacrament, and of the life of every Christian soul and all Christian peoples. Their happiness depends upon the degree of their appreciation or neglect of this sacred treasure, which becomes void and valueless through worldliness, and is won again through the zeal of Christian love and life. Inimitably beautiful and touching in the legend of the Holy Grail is the account of Parsifal’s repeated coming upon the mysterious sign of three drops of blood in the snow, as he wanders hither and thither. Their appearances affect him with such dreamy longing and pain of heart that his companions must tear him away by force. These drops of blood bring back to him a painful remembrance of vanished happiness, but also promise him future bliss. Christians interpret this beautiful passage, which courses mysteriously through many Celtic and Germanic legends, as signifying truth and reality. He ‘who is more lightsome than the clear day, has assumed a countenance like the countenance of man,’ and, as a true child of man, has shed tears and blood, not only three drops, but all His heart’s blood. This every crucifix proves and preaches to us.”¹⁸

ADMONITION

“*God hath proposed Christ Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*” (Romans 3, 24 and 25). The cry of His heart’s blood is not like that of Abel. Every drop reflects His mercy, crying to us: “Out of love for you!” Like a spring joyously bubbling from a rock, it wells forth from Jesus’ heart at the scourging, at the crowning with thorns, and at the crucifixion. Hardly could the Savior await the sacrifice of His blood

THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

of Good Friday; during the previous night he began to shed His blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. And even when He had bled unto death He was not satisfied. After His death He gave up the very last drop of His heart's blood. He gives it up even now: It is again His blood that is offered up at holy Mass, that cleanses us in Baptism and in Penance, and strengthens and sanctifies us in the other sacraments.

"His blood be upon us" (Matthew 27, 25). This cry once had a fearfully apprehensive ring and became a curse for Israel. Do not become a sharer in this curse. To neglect the Church's means of grace would be as if we said: "What care we for His blood!" No; may it come upon us as a blessing: in zealous adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; in devout participation in holy Mass; in worthy reception of the Flesh and Blood of Christ. May it come upon us in the sacrament of Penance and cleanse us of our sins. May it come upon us in our necessities and anxieties, in our labors and trials!

VI. THE FEASTS IN HONOR OF THE HOLY CROSS

(Finding of the Holy Cross, May 3; Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14)

Each spring and fall a feast is celebrated in honor of the Holy Cross. "The cross of Christ is the epitome of the church year, the central point between time and eternity. With its arms it embraces the ends of the earth; it is the object of veneration at every season's turn. Hence, it is but right that the cross is ornamented with the first of spring's roses and with the last gifts of the autumn's flowers."¹⁸ The sacred wood of the cross, the instrument of the Redemption, sanctified by Christ's precious body and blood, is, above all other relics, deserving of the highest veneration. The Commemoration of the *Finding of the Holy Cross* affords the Church an occasion, at the very time of Easter, to announce the triumph of the cross.

“Through Thy holy cross joy came into the whole world”
(Antiphon of Good Friday).

The feast of the *Exaltation of the Holy Cross* is one of the oldest in Christendom. According to the account of the Gallic pilgrim Sylvia, it was celebrated at Jerusalem as early as the fourth century. In the basilica of the Holy Cross, which Constantine had erected on the site of our Lord's suffering and resurrection, and in which the greater part of the holy cross left there by Helena was preserved, the feast was celebrated in the fourth century with the same solemnities as those of Easter and Epiphany. Hither came numberless pilgrims from every country, especially many bishops, monks, and ascetics.

At Rome the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (*Exaltatio Crucis*) was known before Pope Sergius (687-701), and was most likely entered in the calendar of feasts at the time Rome was under Byzantine rule. It was not known in Gaul; and in its place, since the eighth century, another feast of the cross has been celebrated on May 3. With the comingling of the Roman and the Gallic rites, it became a part of the Roman calendar, probably in Carolingian times; for there, since that time, two feasts of the cross have been observed. It became the custom to celebrate the feast of May 3 in commemoration of the finding of the cross, and that of September 14, in remembrance of the restoration of the cross in the time of Emperor Heraclius.

As the legend has it, the site of our Lord's last suffering was devastated after the destruction of Jerusalem and withdrawn from Christian worship by the erection of a temple to Venus. Not until the time of Constantine, when his mother Helena made a pilgrimage to the holy places, and with the aid of Bishop Macarius ordered excavations to be made, were three crosses found. The true cross was determined by means of a cure from sickness or by the restoration of a dead person to life. This wonderful finding of the true cross of Christ gave rise to great joy throughout Christendom. The Emperor Constantine shortly thereafter had two costly churches built, the Church of the

THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Resurrection on the site of the tomb, and the Church of the Holy Cross on the site of our Lord's final suffering. In the latter the cross, incased in a precious setting, was preserved.

The cross is the honor and glory of Christendom. This was the thought that inspired the Empress Helena to seek and honor the cross. The same thought prompted the great Heraclius, emperor of the Greeks, to proceed against King Chosroes of Persia, and recapture the stolen cross. Having regained it in a brilliant victory, he carried it upon his own shoulders back to Calvary, to be set up again as the sign of victory and blessing of the Christian world. It was likewise the thought of the exalted dignity of the cross that inspired the Crusaders. Filled with enthusiasm they cried out their "God wills it!" and hundreds and thousands of princes, counts, and knights set out for the Holy Land. After unspeakable efforts and hardships they wrested the holy sepulcher of our Redeemer from the hands of the infidels. Upon their breasts they bore a red cross as a sign of their readiness to give their blood and their life for Jesus crucified.

Unbounded is the power of the love bestowed upon this holy cross since its erection on Calvary. And its triumph will increase until it appears at the Last Judgment as the sign of the Son of Man—the radiant exaltation of the cross over the entire world.

The cross is with us throughout the course of our life. With this blessed sign we began our earthly career; with it we entered the land of our pilgrimage. This sign of the Church was placed upon our foreheads in the sacrament of Confirmation, so that we may profess it courageously and never be ashamed of it. Our Lord placed a cross upon our shoulders that we might follow with it in His footsteps. With the cross we begin our daily prayers and work. And may we one day close our eyes with the cross in our embrace, and thus enter eternity. Then will our Lord recognize us as His own, because of our love for His cross, and our mortal remains will rest in peace in the cross's shadow.

KINGSHIP OF OUR LORD

O sacred wood! What David sang
Has been fulfilled in thee:
He told the world that God would rule
All nations from a tree.

O lovely and resplendent tree,
In regal purple fair;
Of noble stock the chosen one
The sacred limbs to bear.

O blessed tree! upon thy arms
The world's Redeemer pined.
And like a balance thou didst weigh
The ransom of mankind.

(From the hymn "*Vexilla Regis*")

VII. FEAST OF THE KINGSHIP OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

This feast was instituted by His Holiness Pope Pius XI in the Jubilee Year 1925. As a crowning feast of the church year, it is to be celebrated with solemnity on the Sunday before All Saints'. The successor of St. Peter would have us know the special significance of this feast. He has chosen the day only after due reflection. "The last Sunday of October, when the close of the liturgical year is at hand, seemed to Us a most fitting time to order this celebration for the reason that it will so happen that the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ commemorated during the year will then terminate and be crowned, as it were, by this great solemnity of Christ the King, thus exalting before all men the glory of Him who triumphs in His saints and in His elect" (Encyclical *Ovas Primas*, December 11, 1925).

Following are the five fundamental ideas of the encyclical:

(1) Christ is King. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the entire history of the Church re-echoes this title: Christ is the King of all the world.

(2) For all men acceptance or rejection of Him is fraught

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with a blessing or a curse: for the rulers of states, for the states themselves, for communities, for the family.

(3) Christ is the King of each single one of us. Reason, the affections, the will, and the body—all must serve Him.

(4) Laicism, the crowding of Christ out of the world, is a curse.

(5) The feast of Kingship of Christ should repeatedly call out to the souls of men: "Jesus Christ is the King of the world."

These fundamental ideas are also contained in the Breviary and in the Mass of the day, and in many and various ways: In the Gradual, in the Offertory, and in the Communion we hear the prophets of the Old Testament, David and Daniel, announcing the kingship of Christ. In the Introit and in the Epistle John and Paul are chanting the royal dignity: *Ipsi gloria et imperium in saecula saeculorum*—to Him honor and sovereignty for all eternity (Introit). In the Prayer of the feast the Church prays that all races of men, estranged from God through sin and thereby wounded and disunited, may return again to God and subject themselves to the beneficent rule of Christ ("*ut cunctae familiae gentium, peccati vulnere disgregatae, eius suavissimo subdantur imperio*"). The Gospel recounts the occasion, from the history of our Lord's Passion, on which Pilate, representative of the most powerful ruling force on earth at the time, officially placed before Him this question: "Art thou a king?" And our Savior solemnly answered: "*Thou sayest that I am a king; but my kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18, 36 and 37). The Preface most beautifully expresses the idea of the feast. It is an inspiring glorification of the Son of God: "O holy Lord, Father Almighty, everlasting God, who didst anoint with the oil of gladness Thine only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, that, offering Himself as a spotless victim and peace-offering on the altar of the cross, He should accomplish the sacrifice of man's redemption, and give over to the divine Majesty an eternal and everlasting kingdom, a kingdom of truth

KINGSHIP OF OUR LORD

and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace."

ADMONITION

"*I am a king; but my kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18, 36 and 37). Christ does not wish to rule like other kings of this world, over lands and provinces, with the sword and the power of arms. "*Put up thy sword into its place*" (Matthew 26, 52). His is a spiritual and supernatural rule. He wishes to rule over our reason, our will, and our heart.

To Thee our Ruler from on high,
Christ, King of all mankind,
To Thee we owe whate'er we have,
Above all, heart and mind.

O Christ, the Prince, that bringest peace,
Rule minds now uncontrolled;
And gather all the erring sheep
Into Thy one great fold.

(From the Vesper hymn)

"*Nolumus hunc regnare super nos*—We do not want this man to rule over us!" Thus cried the unbelieving Jews before Pilate's tribunal. The same does the unbelieving world declare today.

The telling words of Psalm 2 appear to have been spoken for our own time. The Psalmist contemplates the contest and victory of Christ, the King of kings, in a powerful drama:

Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people
devised vain things?

The kings of the earth stood up, and the
princes met together, against the Lord, and
against his Christ.

Let us break their bonds asunder: and let
us cast away their yoke from us (Verses 1-3).

The prophetic author here contemplates the contest of the world, especially of our modern unbelieving world, against

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Christ and God. They have broken the bonds, i.e., the law of Christ, and have thrown aside His yoke. Great sections of the modern world and far-reaching circles of modern culture have become godless. The kings of the earth and the rulers of states in great part acknowledge no higher spiritual realm above themselves.

He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them.

Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage (Verses 4, 5).

Now the psalmist beholds Christ Himself in an imposing picture and hears Him speak:

But I am appointed king by him over Sion his holy mountain, preaching his commandment.

The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Verses 6-9).

Such are the ways of God. He has appointed Christ king and has given Him all the nations of the earth. But since men have rejected His kingdom, they will be broken like pottery. Where is safety found? Only in the Kingdom of Christ. The Seer therefore proceeds:

And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth.

Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto him with trembling.

Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way.

When his wrath shall be kindled in a short

DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

time, blessed are all they that trust in him
(Verses 10-13).

“Blessed are all they that trust in him!” Henceforth, wherever we are and whatever be the time, we shall adhere faithfully to Christ our King. “*Adveniat regnum tuum!* Thy kingdom come!” Thus we pray daily in the Our Father. Loyalty to Christ!

VIII. FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

On the feast of the dedication of a church we commemorate the day on which the church was solemnly consecrated. There is a certain grandeur about a Catholic church. “Terrible is this place: it is the house of God and the gate of heaven; and it shall be called the court of God” (Introit).

God is omnipresent, i.e., everywhere, in heaven, on earth, and in all places. But in the house of God He wishes to be present in a special grace-giving way. Here, so to say, He has set up His abiding place among us. And here we are to glorify Him in prayer and sacrifice; here we are to hold communion with Him.

What the paternal home is for the family, that the house of God is for the Christian congregation. The bishop has consecrated it; i.e., he has solemnly given it over to God and His people. It has become a sacred mysterious place. Here dwells the sovereign God; here I am surrounded and penetrated by the breath of eternity; here is the common family home of the entire congregation, in which God’s family is united in holy love for the praising of God, and is cleansed, refreshed, and nourished in the well-springs of salvation, the holy sacraments. And therefore the feast of the Dedication is of great significance, and must not be desecrated through worldly enjoyments. It is the feast of thanksgiving for the harvest of grace garnered in the parish during the year.”¹²

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Because of the great significance of the church for a parish, the dedication day was at all times solemnly observed not only in the church but also outside. Formerly crowds of people from neighboring districts used to come to these feasts, whereby occasion for unseemly behavior was often given. Consequently in many dioceses a special Dedication feast was instituted to be observed by all parishes on the same day.

Since there are churches common to all Christendom, not belonging to a single parish but to all, their dedication is celebrated throughout the world. Such are the principal churches of Rome—St. Peter's, St. Paul's, the Lateran Basilica. Thus, the dedication of the Roman cathedral churches of Sts. Peter and Paul, in which the bodies of the two princes of the apostles rest, takes place on November 9. Similarly the dedication of the cathedral church of a bishopric is celebrated throughout a diocese.

It is indeed wonderful to think that there is hardly a village without its house of God. The parish and the parish church are institutions coming down from primitive times. In their very nature they cannot become antiquated. To bring their significance before our minds is one of the purposes of the feast of the Dedication of the Church.

O Lord of lords invisible!
With Thy pure light this temple fill:
Hither, oft as invoked, descend;
Here to Thy people's prayer attend;
Here, through all hearts, forevermore,
Thy Spirit's quick'ning graces pour.

Here may the faithful, day by day,
Their hearts' adoring homage pay;
And here receive from Thy dear love
The blessings of that home above;
Till loosened from this mortal chain,
Its everlasting joys they gain.

(From the hymn of the feast.

Translation of Rev. John M. Neale)

ADMONITION

Our churches are truly the dwelling places of the most high God. In them He draws near to us, to dwell among us, to heal and console us, to make us happy. They are made beautiful; and through their form they indicate their high purpose. They rear themselves above the houses and sections of cities, above the homes of peaceful villages. They stand as eye-witnesses to faith, as sign-posts on the way to eternity, as they direct the eye of the observer from earth to heaven. With their spires pointing heavenward they are embodied preachers, and their mere appearance is already a lesson for the soul and a source of edification for the receptive mind. Bold, high steeples lend a definite character to a region, and afford a distinctive contour to a city.

Every church, every house of God, calls out to the earthly traveler: "*Behold here the dwelling place of God among men!*" Every spire pointing heavenward tells him:

"You, too, O man, lift your heart heavenward daily;
There in the land filled with sunshine—there on high
is truly your home."

The house of God is thus a symbol of that other eternal dwelling, into which we are one day to enter after our death. Visit the church often. Make its blessing and graces your own, and you will pass over from this militant Church to the Church triumphant, where the triune God appears in inexpressible glory, and where in joyful adoration the song of jubilation resounds eternally.

IX. THE EMBER DAYS

Ember days are special days of prayer and fasting coming at the beginning of the four seasons of the year. Because they occur four times during the year, they are called in the language of the Church *Quatuor tempora*, i.e., the four seasons.

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They occur on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of the following four weeks:

- (1) After the feast of St. Lucy (December 13).
- (2) After the first Sunday of Lent.
- (3) After Pentecost Sunday.
- (4) After the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14).

The present arrangement was determined by Pope Gregory VII (1078).

1. History of the Ember Days. The Ember days are observed only in the Western Church, not in the Eastern Church. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) connected them with apostolic tradition and brought them into relationship with agriculture and the harvest. Old liturgies still contain prayers referring to the harvest.

At first their observance was confined to Rome, where, it appears, they replaced certain heathen nature festivals. The Romans used to celebrate seasonal feasts in June, September, and December, to implore the aid of their divinities for successful crops. Most likely the Church replaced these popular heathen festivals by Christian feasts. The latter were later set down definitely for certain weeks, and to the three existing ones a fourth was added: the first week of Lent.

To this Christian celebration of the reawakened and ripening life of nature, a celebration of the renewal and propagation of the supernatural life was gradually joined (Ordinations). Through the bishops and priests that issue forth out of the sacrament of Holy Orders, the continued administration of supernatural life is assured to future generations. In primitive times ordinations took place at Christmas, since the Chief Shepherd was born on that day; but soon they were transferred to the Ember days.

Later the Ember days became mere days of penance and prayer, their original character being gradually lost. From the Ember days, which were observed very strictly during the Middle Ages, proceeded the days of prayer and penance in vogue among many Protestants.

2. The Purpose of the Ember Days. In conformity with their historical development they have a threefold purpose:

(1) *Dedication of the four seasons to God*, including a petition for God's blessing upon the crops and fruits in the course of the natural seasons of the year; then a joyful thanksgiving to God for the blessings received during the harvest, and an incentive to almsgiving.

(2) *Penance for past sins*, especially for any abuse of God's gifts of nature; for all sins of excess. The Jews observed the Ember fasts in the Old Testament. Christians surely will not permit themselves to be outdone. Hence, according to Pope Leo, the apostles made the Ember fast a matter of obligation; and therefore it should be kept in holy esteem by us as well.

(3) *Prayer to God for worthy priests*. The Church made of the Ember days a kind of spiritual harvest, in the sense in which our Lord said: "The harvest is indeed great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9, 37 and 38). The Ember days, moreover, afforded very suitable occasions for the conferring of Holy Orders. For, according to apostolic tradition, the orders should be conferred after due preparation by a general fast, during divine service, and in the presence and with the approbation of the congregation.

3. The Distinguishing Characteristics of the individual Ember observances. Despite the fact that the Ember days have much in common, they also have many distinguishing characteristics:

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A. *The winter Ember days* combine the thought of the seed resting in the earth with the idea of the seed of Abraham, the offshoot of the root of Jesse: "*Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant justum: aperiatur terra et germinet salvatorem*—Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds reign the just: let the earth be opened and bud forth a Savior" (Introit, Wednesday). As during these days all nature eagerly desires the sun, so the entire Ember liturgy of Advent thirsts and clamors for Christ, "the Sun of justice." (See the Introit and Epistle of Wednesday and the Introit of Saturday.)

B. *The spring Ember days* are entirely in the spirit of Lent; they preach penance and return to God through fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and renewal of one's spiritual life.

C. *The summer Ember days* of Pentecost are replete with pentecostal joy. Hence, they retain, by way of exception, the red color of the preceding feast, together with other instances of the joyous Easter time, e.g., the unabridged *Alleluia*.

D. *The autumn Ember days* are the "crown of the proportionately continuous liturgy of the season (*de Tempore*) after Pentecost. During these days a devoutly thankful harvest-joy is united with higher joy at the thought of its Giver and His revelation."⁸

"We have collected these ideas (regarding the Ember observance) in order to induce the priest to preach occasionally on the meaning of the Ember days, since the latter are always announced to the people, and special prayers are said in many dioceses that God may send us good priests. And why should one not speak from time to time on the Ember days, for instance before the Ember days of autumn or on the first Sunday of Lent or the second of Advent? These incidental fast days will be observed more willingly and gladly, if the people understand the deep reasons for their existence and their edifying history."¹⁶ What has been thus said applies not only to the preacher but to the religious instructor as well.

ADMONITION

We have seen that the Ember solemnities have not only a venerable antiquity, but are also significant for our own time. Hence we should on these days

(1) *Thank God* for all His gifts, especially for food and drink. Before God all of us are but poor beggars. If our loving God should not work the great miracle of the multiplication of bread out on our fields every year, what would happen to us?

(2) *Do penance* for all abuse of God's gifts, especially for excess in eating and drinking. Many Christians today do not want to hear of fasting; they even belittle the ecclesiastical fast. They think that the Church asks us to fast so as to embitter our life. Indeed not! Holy Church is for us a good and solicitous mother. She desires only our best interests. Fasting and abstinence are for healthy people a veritable boon. By complying with the Church's command to fast, we practice the very necessary virtues of moderation and self-control. They are good and wholesome for soul and body.

(3) *Pray* especially that God may send us worthy priests. The dearth of priests is great: "The harvest is great, but the laborers few" (Matthew 9, 37). How can this condition be met? In a material way by supporting societies that have as their object the fostering of vocations to the priesthood. Spiritually through prayer: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9, 38).

Prayer for Priestly Vocations

Why stand you here all the day idle? Go ye also into my vineyard (Matthew 20, 6, 7).

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest (Matthew 9, 38).

Let us pray. O God, who dost not will the death of the sinner but rather that he return to Thee and live: we pray Thee give to Thy Church, through the intercession of the

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blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, laborers who sacrifice themselves for the salvation of souls, true co-workers with Christ. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(300 days each time.—Pius X, March 29 [30], 1908.)

O Lord Jesus, increase the number of priests of Thy Church!

(100 days.—Pius X, February 21 [March 11], 1912.)



(For explanation of design see page 185)

PART FOUR

FEASTS OF SAINTS

Besides Christ, the source and center of the Redemption, we also honor those in whom the effects of the Redemption were made manifest in a special manner. The saints give us an example of the following of Christ; they are our models and helpers, inasmuch as they apply their merits and their power of intercession in our behalf.

“As in the realm of nature the warming, life-giving sun is the center of our visible creation, so in the kingdom of God it is our Lord Jesus Christ. From Him go forth streams of light and life, of blessing and salvation. On the firmament of God’s kingdom there are, in addition to the central Sun, many gleaming constellations of saints who give forth the heavenly light of grace that they have received from Christ. They have won it by being His loyal disciples. Their light and glory is the reflection of the divine light cast upon them by Christ, of the fire enkindled in them by Him. The liturgical veneration of the saints as practiced by the Catholic Church thus redounds to the honor of Christ.”⁸

A. FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

In all that Jesus did to redeem us, His Blessed Mother Mary participated most intimately. Her mother’s love accompanied Him from the first moment of His existence to His very last hour upon this earth. Even when she was not personally with Him in His messianic activity, she nevertheless had a part in it, like a loving and tender mother, in gladness and in sorrow. The Virgin Mother cannot be separated from her divine Son.

FEASTS OF SAINTS

Therefore it is but right and self-evident that the feasts of the Mother of God take a prominent place in the church year.

I. FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

(December 8)

Holyday of obligation

The feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was instituted to solemnize the exalted dignity bestowed upon her through a special grace of God, and in behalf of the merits of Christ—a dignity and choice that preserved her from the least stain of original sin.

We must look to the Orient for the first indications of this feast. In the Eastern Church it was observed as early as the seventh century, and in the Western Church it became known in the ninth century. Pope Sixtus IV introduced it (1476) into the Roman Church; Pope Gregory XV gave to it (1622) the title, “*Conceptio B.V.M. Immaculatae*”; Innocent XII raised it (1693) to a feast of the second class with an octave; Clement XI declared it (1708) a universal holyday; Pius IX gave it (1863) new Breviary hours and a new Mass; Leo XIII raised it (1879) to a feast of the first class with a vigil. The choice of December 8 was determined and approved solely in accordance with its tradition. The First Plenary Council of Baltimore, held in 1846, chose the Blessed Virgin Mary in her Immaculate Conception as the principal patron of the United States.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception is not to be confused with that of the conception of Christ (feast of the Annunciation of the B.V.M.); it is the commemoration of the day on which Mary was created by God, and that in the state of grace; whereas all other human beings come into this world stained with original sin. This idea of the feast was vigorously debated by theologians till far into the Middle Ages, but was clarified more and more under the authority of the popes, so that the dogma, announced by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854, as divinely revealed, had

already been universally accepted as such in the seventeenth century.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception we welcome the dawn of day as the herald of the ardently desired coming of the Sun of Justice; i.e., of the birth of our Savior, to which Mary's feast is a beautiful preparatory festival. Hence the feast fits admirably into the time of Advent. The stronger our longing for the divine child, the more rapturous is our joy in the Mother of God. The All-holy could not but be born of a most pure virgin. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God"—thus the Church has Mary pray (Introit). The Epistle depicts God's wisdom, to which Mary most nearly approaches: "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." May we not say this of our Blessed Lady "whose name is Mary," and to whom the Angel said, "Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women"? (Gospel and Offertory). The Church brings the Mass to a beautiful close: "May the sacraments which we have received, O Lord our God, repair in us the wounds of that sin from which Thou didst in a singular manner preserve the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Mary."

Christian art represents Mary Immaculate as a virgin, with a circle of twelve stars about her head, vested in blue, standing above a crescent, and crushing the head of a serpent that encircles the earth.

There appeared a great wonder in heaven:
A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,
And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.
The Lord hath clothed her with the garments of salvation,
And hath covered her with the robe of righteousness;
Yea, as a bride He hath adorned her with jewels.

(*Responsory*)

ADMONITION

What Mary was from the very beginning, we too should become—stainless and free from sin: "*Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.*" In these words is expressed the

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purpose of our lives: to become, like the Queen of Heaven, pure and spotless. She did not have to wage war against the passions as we must do; but she did have to merit her beauty of soul with the very same means God gives to us. Loving reconciliation to the will of the Most High, complete abandonment of the heart and spirit to the eternal Father, sincerest obedience to the voice of grace—these are the steps by which Mary rose to the height of human perfection. And how many bitter, bleeding wounds this steady, silent, upward journey on the way of God brought in its train. They made of the Virgin a Mother of Sorrows indeed.

To him who resolutely enters upon the contest of life eternal and courageously battles for that which is highest and holiest, our Savior gives the same consolation He once gave to His apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee." With this grace we shall resolve to co-operate faithfully, as Mary did, and then our souls, too, will be lightsome and radiant with most beautiful virtue!

Mary Immaculate! May the memory of her venerable and encouraging picture light up the steep and thorny way to our eternal home; may her hallowed life show us how beautiful virtue really is; may her star-crowned head inspire us to battle against all that is low and base; and may her pure and spotless heart be for us a refuge in life and in death!

Blest Guardian of all virgin souls!
Portal of bliss to man forgiven!
Pure Mother of Almighty God!
Thou hope of earth, and joy of Heaven!

Fair Lily, found among the thorns!
Most beauteous Dove with wings of gold!
Rod from whose tender root upsprang
That healing Flower long since foretold!

Thou Tower, against the dragon proof!
Thou Star, to storm-toss'd voyagers dear!

Our course lies o'er a treacherous deep;
Thine be the light by which we steer.

Scatter the mists that round us hang,
Keep far the fatal shoals away;
And while through darkling waves we sweep,
Open a path to life and day.

O Jesu, born of Virgin bright!
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally. Amen.
(*The Matin hymn,*
translated by Father Caswall)

II. CANDLEMAS

(February 2)

See page 20.

III. FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

(March 25)

One of the earliest of the feasts dedicated to our Lady's honor is the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Its beginnings go back as far as the fifth century. Formerly it was also called *Annuntiatio Domini*, *Annuntiatio Christi*, or even *Conceptio Christi*, whence many considered this to be one of our Lord's feast days. The reference is predominantly to Mary, however.

The feast commemorates the most solemn moment of all history, when the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity became man in the bosom of the Virgin Mary. It is the feast of mankind's exaltation, since human nature was taken on by God in the God-Man Jesus Christ. At the same time the feast commemorates the fact of our Lady's participation in Jesus' be-

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coming man, and consequently her participation in the work of the Redemption.

The Annunciation occasioned the birth of the "Hail Mary," which resounds in the Gospel and in the Offertory of the Mass. On this day God's angel greeted this child of man who was chosen and called to be the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. This happened in holy retirement. But the words which the princely messenger of the kingdom of eternal glory addressed to the simple Virgin in the quiet home at Nazareth gave rise to a millionfold echo in the entire Christian world.

ADMONITION

"The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Ghost." Not merely once a year, but three times a day, the Church reminds us of this mighty grace-bestowing mystery.

Thrice daily the clanging of the bells proclaims in town and country: "The Word was made flesh"—the Son of God became man. Whenever you hear the Angelus bell ringing, pray devoutly and remember this great truth of our holy faith. Think also of that eternal love which drew our Lord from heaven down to this earth, that love which was mindful of you even before you were born. Be not afraid to repeat that greeting of the angel with bared head and praying lips, be it in the field, at home, or on the street. As a spiritual exercise it is but a trifle, but in its results it may become great and meritorious.

The Annunciation

Not a breath stirs the midnight air
In the stilled streets of Nazareth,
But laden with perfumes rare
Sleep hovers, a vision of death.
And eye hath not seen,
In his robe of sheen,
The Herald announce to the Angel's Queen:
'Ave, Maria.'

Not a whisper the silence broke
 As waiting knelt Saint Gabriel;
 But Heaven, till Mary spoke,
 Hung breathless as under a spell:
 When the world to save
 Her 'Fiat' she gave,
 God flowed o'er her heart like a spring-wave tide:
 Ave, Maria.

(Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B.)

IV. FEAST OF THE VISITATION

(July 2)

"*Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth*" (Luke 1, 39 and 40). A peculiar glamor hovers about Mary's journey to her cousin Elizabeth.

The Christian painter Joseph Fuehrich once wrote the following: "As her blessed feet walked through field and wood and hill country, nature was touched by grace, and its dead aspect revived with new life under the rays of her flawless and hallowed beauty." To illustrate this idea he painted a picture which is preserved as a precious token in the royal museum at Vienna. It is named *Mary's Journey over the Hill Country*. The subject could hardly have been represented in a more loving and fascinating manner. Little singing angels are preceding our Lord's virgin Mother; other angels are hovering above her and are strewing roses on the way which leads to the site of the home of Zachary and Elizabeth, now called Ain Karim or *St. John of the Mountains*.

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the most charming and most beautiful of mysteries. There is something of the enjoyment of confiding happiness and the sweetness of family joy about it. Not a breath of sorrow, not a disquieting shadow of the cross falls upon the appealing picture of Mary's visitation, as presented to us by that most descriptive of the

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evangelists, St. Luke. (Compare Luke 1, 39-47). St. Luke's account led to the establishment of this feast.

For us it is difficult to see just why July 2 was chosen for this feast. Perhaps through the Crusades it became known in the Western Church that the Greeks celebrated a feast on July 2. But the object of the feast was not the Visitation. It may be that since the circumstance of our Lady's visiting Elizabeth was intimately connected with the birth of St. John, the Church had Mary's feast come immediately after the octave of the feast of St. John. It seems to have been celebrated first in France, where the council of Le Mans (1247) decreed that it be observed as a feast of obligation. Its wider observance came as a result of St. Bonaventure's action in persuading the general chapter of Franciscans, 1263, to adopt the feast for the entire order of Friars Minor. The Archbishop of Prague, John of Jenstein (died 1400), endeavored to secure its institution for all Christendom through Pope Urban VI. He also composed an Office in honor of Mary's Visitation. The feast was not universally observed until the time of Pius V.

This feast ranks high in the esteem of Catholics. The reason for this is not so much the thought that the sanctification of St. John took place in the womb of his mother at the time of the visitation, but, above all, the thought of the wonderful fulfillment of Mary's prophecy: "*Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,*" and the pleasant realization that we all belong to the immense multitude of Mary's children.

The *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, first uttered in the house of Zachary, are sung in all languages of the world. To this day they are repeated thousands of times daily the world over in the Breviary prayer of the priest.

"Mary went into the hill country with haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth." How many thousands since that day has Mary visited in grace and led to peace! May we too become worthy of realizing Mary's visitation in ourselves!

V. FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

(August 15)

Holyday of obligation

The feast of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady is probably the oldest of Mary's feasts. At first the Church observed only the feasts of martyrs. But as the "birthday" (i.e., the day of death) of saints who did not die a martyr's death began to be commemorated, it seemed but right that the Mother of our Lord, who had always been venerated, should be honored with a special feast day. Hence the day of Mary's departure from this world was commemorated on January 18. Very early, however, Mary's assumption into heaven was accorded liturgical veneration on August 15, until both ideas were united in this latter feast. This commemoration of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven seems to be a later amplification of the ideas of the feast. Under this aspect the feast was celebrated since the sixth century, and there is evidence that its observance had the express approbation and co-operation of Church authorities ever since the end of the seventh century.

In the liturgical books the feast is now called *Assumptio B.V.M.* Thus the difference is expressed between our Lord's and Mary's going up to heaven. Christ rose up to heaven of His own power, hence we say *Ascension of the Lord*; but Mary was taken up into heaven through grace, and we say *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*.

According to Church tradition, Mount Sion is the place of Mary's death; and the Garden of Gethsemane, at Jerusalem, the place of her burial. It appears that the body of her who had borne our Lord was no longer in the tomb after the third day of burial. The belief in the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven was traditional in the East and in the West, and Pope Benedict XIV called this belief "a pious and probable opinion."

This conviction, traceable to Christian antiquity, rests on Mary's preservation from original sin. Original sin is the cause of the penalty of death and bodily disintegration. Mary

passed through the gates of death so that in her boundless love she might be like her divine Son.

The Church has not raised this "last" mystery in Mary's life to an article of faith. But it is universal Catholic teaching, proclaimed in all the world, that Mary's sacred body was awakened by God unto a blessed transfiguration and was by Him taken up into heaven.

In many dioceses, especially of Germany, the blessing of herbs takes place on this day. Such a blessing took place as early as the ninth century, and most likely had its origin in the Church's endeavor to do away with heathen superstitions. Flowers (herbs) are a symbol of Mary, who is affectionately called "Flower of the Field," "Lily of the Valley," and "Mystical Rose" by the Church. The blessing of herbs also appears to have some connection with the pious legend according to which the apostles, on opening once more the tomb of our Blessed Lady, found flowers in the place of her sacred body. At the blessing of flowers and herbs, prayers are said for the welfare of body and soul and for protection against diabolic and other evil influences, in behalf of all those who make pious use of the blessed articles.

ADMONITION

"Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Gospel of the feast). The lowly Virgin who had humbled herself rose to become the Queen of Heaven. The obedient Handmaid of God was raised to the dignity of mistress of angels and of saints. The spotless Virgin is radiant with a beauty no poet can describe; the poor Handmaid of the Child Jesus now bears in her hands the riches of the eternal Sion; the Mother who was once bowed down in sorrow, who could not give a single drop of cooling water to her dying Son, may now pour streams of blessings from golden bowls upon her millions of children.

If during her life on earth Mary could obtain such wonderful help from her Son at the wedding of Cana, how much greater must be her powers of intercession since her exaltation into the

glory of her divine Son, to whom all power is given on earth and in heaven? Eternal love has placed upon her head a most exalted and most beautiful diadem, and has placed in her hand the scepter of unlimited power and goodness.

Hence, our confidence in Mary is unbounded. And in all languages the *Memorare* of St. Bernard resounds unceasingly: "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided." Mary is the refuge of sinners, the health of the weak, and the help of all Christians.

VI. FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

(September 8)

"Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, heralded joy to the whole world; for from thee arose the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord. He destroyed the curse that had lain upon us and gave us blessing; He defeated death and gave us life everlasting" (Antiphon).

Among all the saints, John the Baptist is the only one who shares with the Blessed Virgin the honor of having a birthday feast celebrated by the Church. John was freed from original sin before birth, but Mary was free from this sin from the first moment of her conception. From her birth on, she was the holiest of all creatures. We know nothing regarding the origin of the feast; nor do we know why September 8 was chosen as the day of its observance. At Rome, at the close of the seventh century, the feast was celebrated together with the Annunciation and the Assumption of our Blessed Lady. With the growing influence of the Roman liturgy, it spread into other lands. In the tenth century it was still absent from several important calendars of Gaul and Spain. Thus, it seems that the feast did not spread very rapidly. Among the Greeks, Andrew of Crete, who died in 720, had two sermons for this day.

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The birth of a human being can be evaluated only in view of the outcome and end of its life. We are born, but we do not know what our end will be. He has had a fortunate birth who has a blessed end. Judas was born, became one of Christ's apostles; and yet his birth must be called an unfortunate one because his life ended in despair. "It were better for this man," says our Savior, "if he had not been born." Dismas was born and became a thief; yet his birth was a blessed one because he departed from this world in penance, strengthened by grace from on high. Now if the Church solemnly observes the feast of the Nativity of Mary, it is because she was born to become the Mother of the Son of God, and because her life and activity had a most favorable outcome and a glorious end. The end of a man determines the value of his birth.

ADMONITION

"Let our earth rejoice with most jubilant acclaim, for it was made glorious in the birth of such a virgin" (St. Augustine). This birth was glorious and magnificent for three reasons:

(1) *It was glorious in regard to the past.* The little rosy child lying in the cradle was not an ordinary child of earth. She is truly a royal child, "of kingly lineage," as the Church says, and hence in her descent most "honorable." She is the daughter of the oldest family on earth and the last scion of the most illustrious of genealogical trees. (Compare the Gospel of the Mass).

(2) *It was glorious because of the exceptional qualities and gifts* that accompanied the child that was born. In her bodily endowments and external appearance, the child was most noble, beautiful, pure as freshly fallen snow, as lovely as an unfolding rosebud. In the realm of the spiritual, the child had rare and magnificent gifts of mind, and was unsurpassable in goodness of heart and nobility of disposition. She was untouched by the

curse of sin, full of grace—indeed a miracle of grace such as the world and eternity had never seen.

(3) *It was glorious because of the great purpose of the child.* In the importance and sublimity of her calling, Mary surpasses all her great types of the Old Testament: Esther, Judith, Sarah, and so on. Her calling embraces all mankind, the people of God over all the earth. Eve alone, the mother of us all, can be compared to her. Mary came to be the spiritual mother of all, the prophesied victress over the serpent, the consolation of our poor earth and of the entire human race.

Yet how numerous are the points in which Mary, as the second Eve, surpassed her prototype! “Eve brought tears; with Mary came joy. Eve brought guilt upon the world; Mary gave us the world’s salvation. In Eve we were wounded; but Mary healed these wounds. Eve is the progenitrix of sin; Mary begot blessings for us” (St. Augustine).

Thus the feast is very dear to us. We, as God’s great family, love to celebrate family festivals. Today is Mary’s birthday. Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is also the mother of us all, since our Lord has made us His brethren. May today’s Mass be the occasion of congratulating her! May today’s Offertory be our birthday gift, for it is precious and acceptable to our Mother. It is the divine sacrificial Lamb, her Son, whom we offer to the Father in her honor on this day. The sacrificial repast is our Mother’s festal repast; and her gift to us in return is again the most precious she can give us—the sacrificial Body and Blood of her Son.

VII. FEAST OF THE SEVEN SORROWS

(September 15)

The devotion in honor of the Seven Sorrows, or Dolors, of Mary has its scriptural foundation in the prophetic words of the venerable Simeon: “Thy own soul a sword shall pierce”

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(Luke 2, 35). The Fathers of the Church—Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard—devised meditations on the seven sorrows of the Mother of God. At Rome Pope Sixtus III (432-440) ordered the old Liberian basilica to be restored and dedicated it to Mary and the holy martyrs. Within this church a picture in mosaic shows Mary as the Queen of Martyrs. Thus the sorrows of the Mother of God were venerated very long ago, before their festal observance in the liturgy.

A liturgical feast with the title *Commemoratio Angustiae et Doloris B.V.M.* (commemoration of the anguish and agony of the Blessed Virgin Mary) was introduced into Germany in 1413, at the provincial synod held in Cologne. It was to be observed on the Friday after the third Sunday after Easter. In 1727 Pope Benedict XIII ordered it to be kept by the entire Church and designated the Friday after Passion Sunday for its observance.

Among the Servites and in some dioceses, it was customary to celebrate a second Feast of Sorrows. This, Pope Pius VII extended to the whole Church in 1814; and he decreed that it be celebrated on the third Sunday in September. Today it is observed on September 15.

The devotion in honor of the seven sorrowful mysteries in the life of Mary was gradually developed in the Servite Order, which made the veneration of the sorrowful Mother its special object. These so-called "Seven Sorrows of Mary" are the following:

- (1) The prophecy of Simeon.
- (2) The flight into Egypt.
- (3) The seeking of the Boy Jesus for three days.
- (4) The meeting on the way of the cross.
- (5) The sight of her crucified Son and His death.
- (6) The body of Jesus placed in her arms.
- (7) The burial of Jesus.

At the Mass of both feasts, after the Gradual, the Sequence *Stabat Mater* is said. It was composed by the Franciscan Jaco-

pone da Todi (d. 1306), and depicts touchingly Mary's sorrows beneath the cross of her divine Son:

At the cross her station keeping,
 Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
 Close to Jesus to the last:
 Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
 All His bitter anguish bearing,
 Now at length the sword had passed.
*(From Father Caswall's
 translation of the hymn)*

ADMONITION

Mary stood beneath the cross of her divine Son and vividly experienced His martyrdom, although in an unbloody manner. Thus was Simeon's prophecy fulfilled in her: "A sword shall pierce thy soul."

We look upon the portrait of the Mother of Sorrows with tender sympathy. Her soul was pierced with the sword of bitterest anguish. And yet this picture of her is for us a wellspring of holy consolation. For upon our shoulders, too, a cross is resting, and within our souls there is often a deep and bitter pain.

Innumerable must be the hearts that were consoled and strengthened by the picture of the sorrowful Mother! How much better, with how much greater humility, patience, and love were they not able to bear the cross, even to become reconciled to the cross, and to take it up within themselves as the best of friends, through the Mother of Sorrows! Thus we can understand why we so often meet with a picture of the Mother of Sorrows in the cemeteries of Catholic countries, along quiet country lanes, in forest solitudes, at highway crossings, in cosy cathedral chapels, and in little country churches. Thus, too, we see why sorrowing Catholics betake themselves to this picture seeking consolation there rather than in worldly joys, and why the devotion to Mary's sorrows is so great and esteemed.

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Her sorrow was as profound as the sea, when she saw her Son hanging upon the cross; but even more profound is her mercy and motherly love. Go, then, and seek her picture whenever your soul is torn with pain and sorrow!

VIII. FEAST OF THE HOLY ROSARY

(October 7)

This feast is celebrated in veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary because of the protection which she grants to the Church through the Rosary prayer. It was instituted in grateful commemoration of the wonderful naval victory which the Christians gained over the Turks at Lepanto.

At the time when the Christian naval forces, in command of John of Austria, won their decisive battle over the Turks at Lepanto (October 7, 1571), the rosary confraternities at Rome were praying for victory. Pope Pius V thereupon ordered that a feast of thanksgiving in honor of "Our Lady of Victory" be instituted. At the same time the Pope introduced the petition, "Mary, Help of Christians," into the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. In consequence of the victory of Prince Eugene over the Turks at Peterwardein (August 5, 1716), the feast of Our Lady of Victory was united with the feast of the Holy Rosary, which originally had been observed on October 2.

History of the Rosary. According to the legend, St. Dominic is said to have received the rosary from Mary as a most powerful weapon against the Albigensians, and to have been very successful in spreading the devotion. In reality, however, the rosary is a gradual outgrowth of medieval piety. Towards the end of the twelfth century it was generally customary to use the greeting of the angel (Luke 1, 28) with the words of Elizabeth (Luke 1, 42) as a prayer. This prayer, either repeated in series like a litany, or combined with the Our Father, was for the first time approved and recommended by a Synod held at Paris under Bishop Odo of Sully (d. 1208). In the second half of the fifteenth century the prayer was energetically promoted by the Dominican Order. At this time the prayer still had many different forms. Towards the end

of the sixteenth century the rosary as we have it today was recommended by the popes, was enriched by them with indulgences, was zealously promoted by Dominicans and Jesuits, and thus came into wide and general use. Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII have done much to foster the rosary devotion. The latter especially did much to promote the praying of the rosary, through his encyclicals on the subject and by ordering its daily recitation during the month of October in all parish churches and those dedicated to Mary.

During the church year we live through the entire life, the sufferings, and the glorification of Jesus Christ. In spirit we live over all the events as they occurred in the life of our divine Savior. In a way we do this also whenever we pray the rosary: we recall the whole life, the agonies, and the glorification of Christ and His Blessed Mother. The *joyful mysteries* remind us especially of Christ's birth, and of the Christmas joys. The *sorrowful mysteries* admonish us to think of the bitter sufferings and death of our Lord. The *glorious mysteries* point out to us the glorification of Jesus and Mary. Thus the rosary represents to us, in a small way, the life of Jesus. At the same time it is a *short catechism*, containing the chief tenets of our holy faith.

Rightly do we call this prayer the "Rosary." Together with the many Hail Marys, we weave, as it were, the mysteries of the life of Jesus and of Mary into a wreath. The joyful mysteries are white roses; the sorrowful, red roses; and the glorious, golden roses. This wreath of roses we lay, as a gift, at the feet of the dear Mother of God.

Thus, the rosary is not a mere antiquated remnant of the Middle Ages. Its external frame, made up of the most beautiful of the pearls in the treasury of Christian prayers, is a potent help for the praying soul. Even when every other prayer seems to fail us—in times of spiritual dryness or in sickness—prayer with the rosary in hand still succeeds.

This experience, together with the profound doctrinal truths

the rosary contains and its heartfelt affection for Mary, are perhaps the reason why the rosary has become the favorite prayer of many Catholics; in fact, their lay breviary.

ADMONITION

How should we pray the rosary? A holy man has answered this question: "The mouth should lead the prayer, the heart should accompany the prayer, and one's life should follow out the prayer." Otherwise our rosary would be like a rose-bush bearing leaves and thorns, but no roses. The distracting worldly thoughts at prayer are the thorns, and the thoughtlessly mumbled Hail Marys are the dry and useless leaves. Such a rosary can hardly bring us many blessings.

The Church strongly emphasizes this requirement, namely, that we imitate what the rosary mysteries convey to us. In the Collect on the feast day we read: "O God, Whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection hath purchased for us the rewards of eternal life: grant, we beseech Thee, that, meditating on the mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise." We should imitate:

- (1) The joyous resignation to God's will—*Ecce ancilla Domini*—Behold the handmaid of the Lord! (Joyous mysteries);
- (2) The devout patience and bearing of the cross (Sorrowful mysteries);
- (3) The interest in heavenly things—*Sursum corda*—Lift up your hearts! (Glorious mysteries).

The rosary is a guide to our heavenly home. If you are in need of encouragement and hope, contemplate the *joyous* mysteries, which point out to you the brightly shining star of the sea. If you are agitated by trials and difficulties and your journey leads through thorns and thistles, then recite the *sorrowful* mysteries, for they will console and hearten you. If worldly charms seek to entice you, and sensual delights conjure up a deceptive mirage, a *fata morgana* of the desert

which deceives the traveler and lures him to destruction—then embrace the *glorious* mysteries which will show you higher joys and purer delights.

An old and venerable priest used to say: “The older I become, and the oftener I pray the rosary, the more I appreciate it.” If you will pray the rosary diligently, you will have the same experience. We neither know nor love that which we do not cultivate. The rosary, well worn, often prayed, and greatly appreciated, will console you in life’s trials and will one day draw you up to heaven.

B. FEASTS OF OTHER SAINTS

The countless number of saints is comparable to that of the stars. Hence feasts of saints must not be wanting in the heavens of the church year. The saints have well used the graces merited by our Redeemer, have traded off time for eternity, have fashioned their lives upon Christ, and thus the outcome of their allotted time on this earth was eminently successful.

The saints have not all done their task in the same way. They have not worked according to one pattern or rule, but variously, in accordance with their divine callings as apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, widows, etc. (Compare 1 Corinthians 12, 29, and Ephesians 4, 11.) Accordingly there are feasts of apostles, martyrs, and so on.

Not all saints have arrived at the same degree of holiness, the same glory (1 Corinthians 15, 41). Hence, the feasts of the saints differ in significance and rank. Neither have all of them the same significance over the entire Church Militant: some have a special position in individual countries, provinces, dioceses, congregations, religious orders. Thus some feasts also vary according to countries, dioceses, congregations, and religious orders.

Most of the feasts of saints originally had but a local character. Through the zealous rivalry of the churches, through

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exchange of relics, and especially through the influence of metropolitan churches, such as those of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, the observance of feasts spread throughout a province or throughout a country. The feasts of the saints who stood close to the work of the Redemption, and therefore belong to the entire Church (Mary, the apostles, John the Baptist, Stephen), naturally had a greater tendency to assume a universal character.

The day of a saint's death served as feast day from the very beginning, because this day was considered the birthday for heaven (*natale, dies natalis, natalitium*: birthday). Exceptions are the Blessed Virgin and John the Baptist, whose earthly birthday is solemnly commemorated because both were already sanctified before their birth.

Feasts of martyrs are among the oldest of the feasts of saints. It was customary in the primitive Church to assemble on the day of death or burial of martyrs at the place of burial, and there offer up the sacrifice of the Mass. Out of this commemorative divine service, the liturgical observances of feasts gradually developed; first those of martyrs, and later also those of confessors. The feast of St. Martin, Bishop of Tours (d. 397), celebrated on the day of his death (November 11), is perhaps the oldest feast of a confessor. The saint's immediate episcopal successor had a memorial chapel erected in his honor over his grave.

Uniformity in the veneration of saints in the West was furthered by the gradual spread and prominence of the Roman liturgy. The same purpose was achieved by the practice of canonization which was introduced during the Middle Ages.

At first bishops were called upon to decide on the veneration of saints in their own dioceses. Canonization through papal declaration for the entire Church did not take place until medieval times. The oldest instance is the canonization of the

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

holy bishop Ulric of Augsburg, which was undertaken by Pope John XV during a synod held at Rome in 993.

In order to prevent certain abuses, which easily came with the privilege held by individual churches of introducing new forms of worship, Pope Alexander III, about 1170, reserved the right of confirming each new commemorative observance. Since that time the popes kept all such veneration of saints under surveillance; and there arose a regulated course of canonization which demanded, as the first condition of beginning a public cult, proof of a heroically virtuous life.

Of the great number of feasts of saints occurring during the church year, those following herewith are outstanding, and are arranged according to the sequence of the Litany of the Saints.

I. FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

(June 24)

Among the saints in heaven there is one group in particular which is unsurpassed in eminence and dignity. It is that of the saints who were called by God to participate, either in body or spirit, in the revelation of our Lord's Incarnation, such as the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. And among these St. John the Baptist has a first place, because of his intimate relationship to our divine Savior.

With the exception of the birthday of Mary, this is the only birthday feast of a saint solemnly commemorated in the church year. If we compare the birthday of Christ with the rising of the sun, and Mary's birthday with the coming of dawn, then the birthday of St. John is like the appearance of the morning star. These are the three holy births which the Church extols in her liturgy.

The birthday feast of St. John the Baptist is very ancient. Originally it belonged to the great feasts of the Church, and had a preparatory period of fasting beginning with Pentecost.

FEASTS OF SAINTS

This fast was reduced to a fourteen-day abstinence period since the eleventh century, but today it is abolished altogether. The feast was distinguished, moreover, by the celebration of three Masses. The first, after the first Vespers, commemorated the calling of St. John; the second, during the night, commemorated the announcing of his birth by the archangel (the vigil Mass of today); and the third, on the day itself, commemorated his dignity as the baptizer of our Lord and the preparer of His ministry. Until recent times "St. John's Day" was a feast of obligation with required cessation from manual labor.

The birthday feast of St. John is celebrated at a time when the days become shorter; and the birthday feast of our Lord, when they begin to grow longer. Thus is outwardly indicated what St. John himself said: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3, 30).

"*What an one, think ye, shall this child be?*" (Luke 1, 66). Wondrous events took place at St. John's birth. In astonishment the people asked: "What shall this child be?" (Compare the Gospel of the Mass.) We know what has become of him: he became "great before the Lord." For John was:

- (1) An angel in his lifetime,
- (2) A prophet during his active life,
- (3) A martyr in death.

1. *John was an angel in his lifetime*, because he had the gifts and advantages of an angel (his sanctification in the womb of his mother) and because he led an angelic life. At home and in the desert he was angelically pure, holy, and continent.

2. *John was a prophet during his active life*. What the angel had prophesied to Zachary—this child "shall be great before the Lord . . . shall go before him in the spirit and the power of Elias . . . to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people" (Luke 1, 15ff.)—was fulfilled in John when he entered upon his career

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

as a preacher of penance and as a forerunner of our Lord in the country around the Jordan.

3. *John was a martyr in death.* His death was a worthy reward of his life. It was a death in the cause of justice, a death for Jesus' sake. As during his life, so did his victorious executioners fear him even after his death (Mark 6, 14; Luke 9. 7). Read the Savior's eulogy of John! (Matt. 11, 7ff.).

Who can comprehend the happiness and the glory which is the Baptist's since his martyrdom? It is reflected here upon earth in the Church with her tribute of veneration. His name occurs in many liturgical texts and prayers, especially at the celebration of holy Mass. His testimony to the divinity of Jesus is still the eloquent and official expression of the Church's belief in the true Presence of our Savior: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1, 29).

ADMONITION

From the great St. John we ought to learn how necessary it is for us to be counted among the friends and loved ones of Jesus. From his youth to his martyrdom John led a pure and chaste life. Let us imitate him in chastity and purity, for only the pure of heart shall see God.

St. John retained his intrepid courage in the face of all the flatteries and all the threats that assailed him. The threats of Herod and those of the scribes and pharisees could not intimidate him or bring him to a fall. We can imitate him by faithfully complying with the duties of our state of life and our duties as Christians; and this without allowing ourselves to be deterred by taunt or temptation.

Throughout the space of this wide world not one
Was holier born than was St. John;
He had the joy to baptize Him
Who came to cleanse the world from sin.

(From the hymn of the feast)

II. FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

(March 19)

St. Joseph, the foster father of our Lord, was not accorded public veneration until comparatively late times. The first traces of veneration of him are discernible in the West in the ninth century. Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) included the feast of St. Joseph in the Breviary as a "simple feast." Pope Gregory XV raised it to a day of obligation. Pope Pius IX, on September 10, 1847, instituted the patronal feast of St. Joseph, and after the taking of Rome by the Piedmontese in 1870, proclaimed him the protector of the universal Church. Pope Benedict XV prescribed a special Preface in his honor.

Two feasts are now celebrated in St. Joseph's honor: the first, on March 19 (double, first class), on which his intimate participation in the work of the Redemption is commemorated; the second, on the third Wednesday after Easter, to commemorate his powerful protection of the Church. As the loving foster father of Jesus, the protector and patron must also care for the faithful individual soul. The children of the Church are the brethren of the divine Child; and hence, as Joseph's foster children, are also placed under his protection.

The high dignity of St. Joseph is expressed in the words, "foster father of Jesus." Holy Scripture says little about him, merely that he was a just man. With that it indicates that he faithfully complied with his eminent position as protector of the Holy Family. In sacred history he meekly steps into the background. Nor is there, in the Scriptures, any mention of his death. But there are indications that he died before the public ministry of our Savior had begun. He perhaps had the most consoling death that man can have, dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Humble and unknown he went through life, and humble he remained for centuries in the history of the Church,

STS. PETER AND PAUL

because it took a long time before he was commemorated in the liturgy.

ADMONITION

Joseph of Egypt once said to his brethren: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not afraid, and let it not seem a hard case . . . for God sent me before, that you may be preserved. . . . God hath made me as it were a father to Pharao, and lord of his whole house, and governor in all the land of Egypt. Make haste, and go ye up to my father . . . come down to me and linger not" (Genesis 45, 4ff.).

Similarly St. Joseph speaks to us: I am Joseph, the foster father of your Savior and your father. Come to me and be not afraid. For your welfare the King of heaven has made me the lord of His house and protector in the whole kingdom of Jesus Christ. Come therefore to me and I will open up for you the treasure chests of grace. I will make you happy; I will lead you to Jesus and into the land of eternal bliss.

Among those who cherished a great veneration to St. Joseph, St. Teresa holds a conspicuous place. Regarding this great helper in every need, she wrote: "I have chosen the glorious St. Joseph as my patron and intercessor before God. I have recommended myself often to him, and have had the experience that in everything pertaining to my honor as well as to my eternal salvation, I have secured help greater than expected. I cannot remember that I asked anything of him that I did not receive. It seems that God bestows upon other saints the grace to assist us in certain circumstances; but that St. Joseph has the power to help us in all circumstances, I know from experience."

III. FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

(June 29)

At the entrance of Solomon's temple there stood of old two mighty brazen pillars. These significantly bore the names

FEASTS OF SAINTS

“Jachin” and “Boas,” which meant “Established” and “With power.” What was typified in the Old Testament, became a reality in the New.

At the entrance to holy Church stand the two mighty pillars, the great princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul. Upon the one our Lord “established” His Church when He said: “Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16, 18). The other He furnished “with the power” of His divine word, that he might lead pagan nations into the bosom of the Church. “With power his word hath gone forth, and his sound unto the ends of the world” (Psalm 18).

The feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul at first had a local observance only, like the feasts of all the other martyrs. It was celebrated only at Rome, where the two apostles, according to historical tradition, suffered death under Nero on the same day, and in the filial churches dependent upon Rome. But the reverence shown for these apostles and for the Roman Church soon brought about a general observance of their feast.

The high rank of this feast day cannot be better expressed than in the incomparable language of the Church: “This day Simon Peter ascended the agonizing cross, alleluia; this day the keeper of heaven’s keys went on his way to Christ rejoicing; this day the apostle Paul, the light of the world, laying down his head for the name of Christ, was crowned with martyrdom, alleluia” (Antiphon of the *Magnificat*). Thus the Church chants the praise of the two princes of the apostles on this day. The Roman Martyrology announces the feast in the following words: “At Rome the birthday of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, who suffered under the Emperor Nero. The first was fixed to the cross with his head downwards, was buried on the Vatican, and is venerated over all the earth; the second was beheaded, was buried along the road leading to Ostia, and received the same honors.”

The teacher of the world and keeper of heaven’s gate,
Rome’s founders twain and rulers too of every land,

STS. PETER AND PAUL

Triumphant over death by sword and shameful cross,
With laurel crowned are gathered to the eternal band.

O happy Rome! who in thy martyr princes' blood,
A twofold stream, art washed and doubly sanctified.
All earthly beauty thou alone outshinest far,
Empurpled by their outpoured life-blood's glorious tide.

(Vesper hymn,

translation of Monsignor Hall)

In the liturgy the two great apostles are as inseparably united as two brothers. Whenever the Church celebrates a feast in honor of St. Peter, St. Paul is sure to be commemorated, and vice versa. True, St. Peter takes precedence on the present feast day; but then there is a special commemorative feast in St. Paul's honor on the morrow (June 30).

The basic idea of the festal Mass is our Lord's saying: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church." It begins dramatically with a song of thanksgiving on the part of the prince of the apostles: "Now I know in very deed, that the Lord hath sent His angel. . . ." The Epistle recounts Peter's wonderful deliverance out of prison, and typifies God's protection of the papacy and the Church. The Gospel tells us how our Lord made Peter the foundation rock upon which His Church was built.

ADMONITION

June 29 is in first place the feast of *St. Peter*—a feast of thanksgiving for the primacy, a feast of joy over that glorious divine act by which our Lord erected His Church upon an unchangeable and imperishable rock. This feast ought to renew in us our unswerving loyalty to the successor of St. Peter, the Holy Father at Rome. We are Catholics and members of the true Church only as long as we remain faithful to Rome.

On the feast of Corpus Christi the Church renewed her faith in her invisible Head Jesus Christ, hidden in the most Blessed Sacrament; today she renews her faith in her visible head on

FEASTS OF SAINTS

earth, in that rock upon which our Lord had built her, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail (Matth. 16, 18).

The world has witnessed many great wonders: it has beheld the Pharaohs erecting the pyramids; it has seen Cyrus establishing his world empire; it has followed Alexander on his victorious course through Asia; it has witnessed the gradual growth of the Roman empire and its conquest of all parts of the earth; it has seen Charlemagne rearing his Frankish empire; it has beheld the animated armies of the Crusaders in their expeditions to the East to rescue the tomb of our Savior; it has seen the new inventions of modern times remaking human life; but the world has never witnessed anything greater than the papacy and the Catholic Church.

What would the world be without the papacy? The magnificent and beautiful Mount Hermon, in whose shadow the papacy was announced to the world, is but a pale figure of the greatness and power, of the majesty and solidity, of the plenitude of blessing and victory of the Roman primacy.

Hence "On to Rome!" not "Away from Rome!" On to Peter; for where Peter is there is the Church which has the promise from on high: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Then let my right hand be forgotten!
Let my tongue cleave to my jaws,
If I do not remember thee,
If I make not Jerusalem
The beginning of my joy.

(*Psalm 136*)

IV. FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

(November 1)

Holyday of obligation

All Saints' is the late autumn feast of the Church. It has, on the one hand, the character of rest and completion; on the other,

it is an insistent admonition that we, too, ought to bestir ourselves to zealous activity. The Church commemorates one or the other of the saints almost daily, from the Mother of God on, down to the children of Bethlehem who received their heavenly reward without merit of their own. Now, towards the close of her year (analogous to the feast of the Blessed Trinity), the Church unites all the feast days of her saints into the one great feast of "All Saints." In it the Church is mindful not only of those whose memory was celebrated during the year, but also of the many others who have no feast in their honor. It is the Church's intention on this feast to venerate, in one common festival, all of God's elect who rejoice in the vision of God, even those whose names are unknown to us.

The original meaning of All Saints' is that of the dedication of a church. At Rome, in 610, Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon to the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the martyrs and enriched it with many relics taken from the catacombs. He thereby induced great crowds of pilgrims to attend the anniversary of this dedication. Pope Gregory IV (827-844) transferred this feast to November 1, and at the request of Louis the Pious extended it to the whole Church.

All Saints' is a great and most solemn feast. There is really no greater family feast than today's celebration. Hence the Church intones her festal Mass with the jubilant invitation: "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a festival day in honor of all the saints, at whose solemnity the angels rejoice and give praise to the Son of God." In the Epistle St. John contemplates in a mystic vision the throngs of the elect who have lived in accordance with the Eight Beatitudes enumerated in the Gospel. The Gospel itself, by means of the Eight Beatitudes, shows us the way to sainthood. The Beatitudes form the program of Jesus Christ, the spirit of grace and of the law of Christ. All of the saints are both a proof and an explanation

FEASTS OF SAINTS

of the impressive Gospel. Humility, meekness, holy mourning, desire after justice, mercy, purity of heart, peacefulness, fortitude in all trials—these are the eight highways to our eternal home. “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

ADMONITION

All Saints! The feast insistently urges us on to imitate the saints and to long for our participation in their heavenly bliss. They speak to us of the way which leads up to it. They preceded us; we should follow them. They had the same battles, efforts, temptations, and sufferings as we have. They, too, were flesh and blood like ourselves; they had a heart and emotions like ours, they felt pain and self-denial as we do.

The saints were not holy from birth on. They became saints gradually, by the arduous way of self-denial and self-mastery. That is our consolation. “*Potuerunt hi, potuerunt hae, cur non poteris tu?*—These could do it, and the others; and if they could, why not you?” (St. Augustine). Indeed, what they could do, we can do also: preserve our purity of soul, and work and toil in the position in which God has placed us. No more than this is asked of us. Our Redeemer’s yoke is sweet and His burden is light; and these we shall bear in holy love. We shall remain loyal unto death, as the friends of God were loyal, whose jubilant song resounds in all the heavens and whose laurels are resplendent throughout eternity.

Thus we look up on this day and gladly lift up our countenance: “How glorious is that kingdom over which Christ rules and His holy ones with Him.” We, too, want to enter that kingdom; thither we must go. There will come a day, an All Saints’ day, on which we, too, must be numbered among the venerated.

V. ALL SOULS' DAY

(November 2)

After the Pentecost Sundays have unfolded the kingdom of God on earth by presenting every aspect of the Church Militant and after All Saints' day has included the Church Triumphant in a magnificent composite picture, the idea of the Communion of Saints urges us on further to a solemn commemoration of the Church Suffering. Upon the feast of those living in glory, follows the commemoration of the dead, "who yet live, even after they are dead." ¹⁶

The significance of the day is beautifully expressed in the Martyrology at Prime: "Today is the solemn commemoration of all the faithful departed. The Church, as a common and tenderly affectionate mother, has just made an effort to venerate all her children in possession of the joys of heaven, with becoming songs of praise. Today, with no cessation of her motherly care, she would help all her children suffering in purgatory, by interceding for them with Christ, her Lord and Bridegroom, so that they may be quickly taken up into the communion of the citizens of heaven."

The origin of this commemoration is found in the monasteries of the Middle Ages. St. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) had already decreed in his monastic rule that a common Requiem Mass be celebrated for all the deceased members of the order on the day after Pentecost. In 998 Abbot Odilo of the famous Benedictine monastery of Cluny issued a regulation for all the monasteries of his congregation, according to which, after the Vespers of November 1, the bells were to be tolled, and the Office of the Dead chanted; while on the day following, all priests of the congregation were to celebrate Mass for all the departed members of the Church. Since the order of Cluny had widespread influence, this devout custom was soon adopted throughout Gaul and Germany. In other countries, too, it was accepted in a number of dioceses; but in the Roman Church it is not met with until the fourteenth century.

FEASTS OF SAINTS

Pius X and Benedict XV gave a special distinction to the day by granting:

(1) *The great "toties quoties" indulgence for the Poor Souls.* He who receives the sacraments, visits a church or proper chapel, and there prays according to the intention of the Holy Father, can gain a plenary indulgence, applicable to the Poor Souls, at each such visit; and this from noon of November 1 to midnight of November 2.

(2) *The celebration of three Holy Masses* to all priests on this day. The occasion for this permission was the great number of those who fell in the World War. The Pope (Benedict XV, August 10, 1915) wished to come to the assistance of the countless dead by this means, so that the prayer of the Church might rescue them soon from the flames of purgatory.

The priest may celebrate the first Mass according to his own intention, and the two others only according to the intention of the Holy Father. He may receive an alms (*stipendium*) only for the first Mass. Thus the Pope granted the great grace of the three holy Masses only in behalf of the Poor Souls, and not—as those inimical to the Church maintain—for the "material advantage of priests."

All Souls' day is distinguished in the liturgy by a special Office, which begins with the Vespers of the Dead after the second Vespers of All Saints' day. In the afternoon of All Saints' it is customary in many places to hold special liturgical services in cemeteries.

ADMONITION

"Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis—O Lord, grant them eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon them" (Introit).

You, too, should do your best to come to the assistance of the Poor Souls by means of prayer, of indulgences (the plenary *toties quoties* indulgence), and by assisting at holy Mass. But especially should you help those who were near and dear to you

in life. "Lord of mercy, Jesu blest, grant them all eternal rest" (Sequence).

Do we not all want to cast a loving glance beyond the confines of our own cemeteries at home? Indeed so, and we shall pray with the Church: "O Lord, grant them eternal rest!" We shall pray for all those who have before us rejoiced in the light of day and have had to feel the thorns and thistles of this earth. For in the midst of the great cemetery of this world, which embraces the graves of every race and country, there stands the cross of the Son of God, the symbol of that Love which sacrificed itself for us all.

A whole-hearted love for the Poor Souls is a sure sign of a living Catholic faith; one might almost say a sign of being among the elect. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5, 7).



(For explanation of design see page 185)

THE END OF THE CHURCH YEAR

(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost)

This Sunday is always the last, even when there are more than twenty-four Sundays after Pentecost. Should there be more than twenty-four, those remaining from the Sundays after Epiphany are inserted before the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

The liturgy of this Sunday carries us in spirit to the time of Christ's second coming. Our Savior points to the signs that are to announce His arrival in glory. A mood of joy in the consciousness of victory is discernible in the songs of the Mass, for the faithful know that for them the Lord will not appear in wrath but as the Prince of peace: In the Introit we read, "The Lord saith: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction: you shall call upon Me and I shall hear you; and I will bring back your captivity from all places."

In the Gospel two very important events are brought home to us: *the end of the world and the last judgment*. The realm of creation, as it exists today, will not last forever. Sooner or later it will collapse into a heap of ruins, and then the last judgment will take place. Jesus Christ will come from heaven in great power and majesty and will judge the living and the dead.

Just when the end of the world and the last judgment will come, we do not know, for God did not reveal this to us. The early Christians were ever mindful of the day on which Jesus would appear in His glory. In their prayers and longings they seemed to call out: "*Maran atha!*—Come, O Lord." Every Communion was for them a preparation for the ardently desired day of Jesus' final coming. With this idea of the primitive Christians the whole church year is impregnated. With this idea it likewise comes to a close, only to begin the new Advent with the same note of longing: "*Maran atha!*—Come, Lord Jesus!"

THE LAST DAY

Day of wrath and doom impending,
David's word with Sibyl's blending!
Heaven and earth in ashes ending!

O, what fear man's bosom rendeth,
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth!

Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth,
Through earth's sepulchers it ringeth,
All before the throne it bringeth.

Death is struck, and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking,
To its Judge an answer making.

Lo! the book exactly worded,
Wherein all hath been recorded;
Thence shall judgment be awarded.

When the Judge His seat attaineth,
And each hidden deed arraigneth,
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

What shall I, frail man, be pleading?
Who for me be interceding,
When the just are mercy needing?

King of majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us!

Think, kind Jesu! my salvation
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation;
Leave me not to reprobation.

THE LAST DAY

Faint and weary Thou hast sought me,
On the Cross of suffering bought me;
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?

Righteous Judge! for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution,
Ere that day of retribution.

Guilty, now I pour my moaning,
All my shame with anguish owning;
Spare, O God, Thy suppliant groaning!

Through the sinful woman shriven,
Through the dying thief forgiven,
Thou to me a hope hast given.

Worthless are my prayers and sighing,
Yet, good Lord, in grace complying,
Rescue me from fires undying.

With Thy favored sheep O place me,
Nor among the goats abase me,
But to Thy right hand upraise me.

While the wicked are confounded,
Doomed to flames of woe unbounded,
Call me with Thy Saints surrounded.

Low I kneel, with heart submission,
Crushed to ashes in contrition;
Help me in my last condition!

Ah! that day of tears and mourning!
From the dust of earth returning,
Man for judgment must prepare him;
Spare, O God, in mercy spare him!
Lord all-pitying, Jesu Blest,
Grant them Thine eternal rest.

(*"Dies Irae"*,

translation of Dr. W. J. Irons)

ADMONITION

The church year is approaching its end! When a civil year is drawing to a close, we glance back to ponder over what the year has brought us and what it has taken from us, over its joys and sorrows. We look over our debits and credits. Similar thoughts are in place also at the close of the church year. The church year enters deep into the life of our souls; it unites our life here with the life beyond; and into this present life it is ever weaving thoughts of eternity.

How did you make use of the past church year? Have you found and put on Christ? Have you lived and believed with the Church? Have you imbibed her teachings with a good will and remained true to her precepts? Did you become purer, more conscientious, more holy? Have you kept the Commandments better? Have the ringing of the bells and the singing taken you heavenward? Have you made use of the means of grace? If you cannot truthfully say "Yes" to these questions, then accuse yourself before God and in a contrite spirit promise: I will make better use of the next church year! I will live with the Church!

LIVE WITH THE CHURCH!

If we live with the Church, that is, if we participate in the liturgy of the Church during the church year, we make use of our earthly time for eternity. If we thus repeatedly go through the life of Christ on earth with every recurring church year, we shall also participate in His triumphant life that has no end. Our living with the Church, year after year, is a preparation for the life of glory in heaven. May we live with our Savior upon earth so that we may continue to live with Him in eternity!

Not for this world is our vocation, but for the one that is higher. As children of God we should have a foretaste, in each holy church year, of the eternal participation in God's blessed-

ness. Preserve, therefore, the spirit of living with the Church. Learn to live her life more intimately each passing year, and thus make your life one great prayer and battle with and for Christ the Lord, the King of all glory!

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EXPLANATION OF TAILPIECE DESIGNS

Page 23. The rising sun. Christmas celebrates the appearance of Christ the Sun of Justice. The letters X and P form an old monogram of Christ made up of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ. The six-pointed star is the star of creation—the Incarnation is as a new creation of human nature. The anchor, formerly a disguised form of the cross, is the sign of hope. It indicates our hope of a new birth in Christ through His cross.

Page 107: The resplendent Sun of Justice (Christ) is in full glory after the victory over death. The splendor of the risen Christ extends everywhere. Below are the calm waters of the sea of life, over which the ship of Christ's Church is to sail until the end of time (see page 146). The monogram is formed from the initial letters (I and X) of the Greek words for Jesus Christ. The crown above is the sign of the victory of Christ over sin and death, which was completed through the Resurrection.

Page 146: The time after Pentecost represents the life of Christ as unfolding in His Church to the end of time. The bark of Peter is sailing on the waters of life and sharing in the full sunshine of Christ, the Sun of Justice, while the Holy Spirit is guiding and inspiring the Church (see also page 107).

Page 179: The saints in heaven are the good wheat that was gathered from the harvest of life. They are taken up into the divine Christ as His perfect members and share in His glorious life, crowned with His crown. Note the wheat as taken up into the divine Sun of Justice which as heretofore is marked with the monogram of Christ. The saints in heaven enjoy the full peace (PAX) of Christ.

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